Horseshoe Prairie Area Purchased By U. S. From Indians 121 Years Ago

William Connor Only Permanent Settler in What Is Now Hamilton County—Made Friends and Traded With Tribesmen, Married Squaw.

By OLIVE INEZ DOWNING.

TURNING over the pages of Indiana's history and studying the incidents of the lives of the pioneer forefathers, we find that 121 years have elapsed since the government purchased from the Indians the land that now comprises Hamilton county.

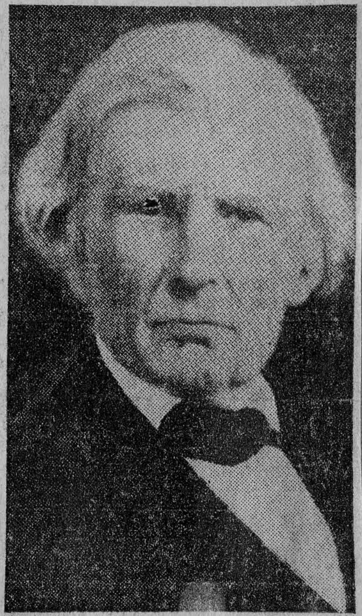
Then the only permanent settler in the Horseshoe Prairie area was William Conner, living with his Indian wife, Mekinges, in a double log cabin amid the perils of the wilderness. He was a fur trader at this location, which was four miles south of the present site of Noblesville, the Indians bringing their pelts to him to exchange for trinkets and goods that he kept in reserve in a room of the log cabin. Perhaps they would be attracted by the glitter of steel knives, or gleaming hatchets, or possibly by the never-failing lure of beautiful strands of beads.

The log house of William Conner was constructed first by the sills being put in place, a saddle made at the end of each sill (as a usual thing these sills were 20 feet long) then the short logs were notched to fit the saddle on the sills—another saddle constructed in the same manner, on and on till the desired height was reached. William Conner, with the assistance of a French Canadian, completed the roofing one moonlight night in August, probably about the year 1802.

Had Few Tools.

The doors were fastened with stout wooden pins and were swung on wooded hinges. Logs were cut out to supply the windows and oil paper served as the covering. Then the stick chimney was constructed and holes were bored in the walls—then a post set on the floor with holes in it, poles laid connecting it with wall and called a bed. Besides that for commodities were some benches, a few stools and what they termed a dresser built for Mekinges' dishes and that finished the job of the carpenter. The Indian wife was left to supply and arrange the interior as she pleased. The tools used in the cabin construction were a hand saw, a cross-cut saw, two augurs, one maul, one mattock, several wooden wedges, an iron wedge, a broad ax, one hatchet, while each man had a chopping ax—so it was really marvelous that they could erect this home amid so many difficulties and with so few facilities.

ELIZABETH CHAPMAN CONNER.


WILLIAM CONNER.

William Conner, who had been reared among the Indian tepees, learned the wily craftsmanship of the race and was an expert at his trade, he dressed, stretched and packed the furs brought to him by the redmen and sent them to his brother John, located at the site of Connersville, 60 perilous miles away. The journey was made by pack horses and on all sides were the towering forest giants, the lurking redmen and wild animals.

Admired for Shrewdness.

The furs were conveyed to Connersville by the hazardous road along the present site of New Castle and Anderson, and on the return trip John sent supplies of goods to William.

William Conner and his dusky Indian wife lived together several years and life's checkered sunlight and shadow played about their cabin door. The story runs that she was the daughter of Chief Anderson of the Delawares, and was first attracted to Conner by his decisive manner and shrewdness of dealing with her tribesmen, he enticed by her tribal beauty and magnetic allurement led on in the brief courtship and soon claimed her as his bride.

Time passed and we can vision her in the log cabin with their six children gathered about her while she made colored patterns for shawls and rugs according to her Indian training. With the exception of the Indian trading posts, the country was indeed the wilderness for there was no mill, no store and no physician in a closer range than Connersville, so one man had to be all tradesmen and assume all professions in one.

fe Takes the Trail.

Mekinges did not enjoy her life in the ranks of the white man and when her tribesmen wended their way westward, to pitch their tepees on new territory—she attired in her richest Indian finery, with her six children and a caparison of 60 ponies took the trail with them. A study of the old platbook of Hamilton county concerning the land entries revealed the fact that 600 acres of land were entered by William Conner and his heirs by his Indian wife. He had aforboding that when her kinsmen trekked toward new homes that she would be found in their midst so with his friend, Marshall, who, too, journeyed westward, he made ample provisions for Mekinges and his children.

He divided the chest of silver and gave her half of the contents besides, that there was a business arrangement between them at the time in 1820 that she left him despite his persuasions and took the Indian trail toward the Western reservation. He asked of her one stipulation and that was that his children should return to visit him from time to time, which desire they complied with in a lackadaisical fashion. So far as is known Mekinges never returned to the old home.

Adopts Indian Customs.

William Conner had lived with the redmen so long that he had assumed many of their ways and looked more the part of the Indian warrior than the role of the white man of the wilderness. But with the desertion of Mekinges and the children, he began to make other plans. His second marriage was with Eliza Chapman, a white girl, whom he had seen and admired at the Finch home and this was the first marriage of white people solemnized in that settlement. Many Indians came as visitors, standing about in the offing but always on friendly terms for Conner ever dealt with them in an amicable spirit, so they bore no aggressive attitude toward him. Sometimes they would carry baskets, hides, venison and moccasins for a prospective trade or sale.

The brick house built by William Conner to replace the old log structure was a very substantial building and from its vantage ground on the bluff it had advantages as a "lookout" for miles around. It had two stories and a fireplace graced each room to produce comfort and give the friendly welcome. The house was completed in 1823 and for its time proved a very impressive home; its walls of solid brick, its woodwork of yellow poplar and the extra fancy touches made it an innovation in that day.

Landmark Preserved.

In 1935, Eli Lilly, president of the Indiana Historical Society purchased the old landmark and its broad, surrounding acres—restored it to its original pristine loveliness and preserved William Conner's web of life for the benefit of all historical-minded people. Mr. and Mrs. Lilly with great discrimination searched diligently for every article that would connect the links of history to William Conner.

Near this dwelling Conner built a horse mill and a distillery. The mill promoted the work of grinding corn or rye and the distillery was the factor in whisky manufacture. For a long time the people of Indianapolis came by boat to Conner's Mill for their supplies of flour, meal and whisky.

A marker locates the spot where Conner's best bargaining days were spent with the shrewd but seldom parsimonious Indians. They liked this son of the wilderness, he had a special charm for them—so much that they did not desire to ever take advantage of him or make a surreptitious movement against him.

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INDIANA ROOM
PAMPHLET FILE

Connor

X

RIGHT HERE IN INDIANA— Sat. Spec. 3/25/67

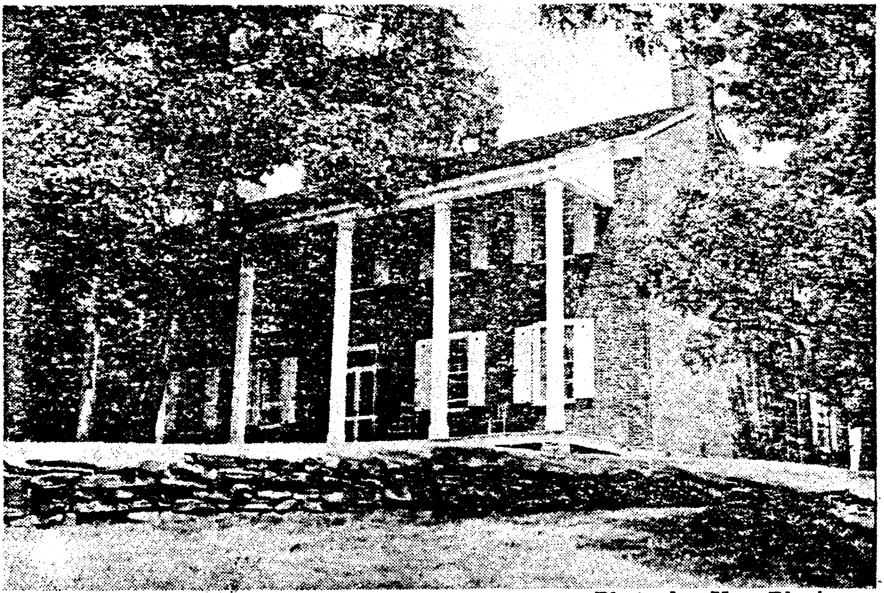

Photo by Van Blaricum

Mansion built in 1823.
This is a view of the west porch of the historic Conner

The frontier trading post settlement in Hamilton County which might have been the capital of Indiana has now become a historical museum. As such it is increasingly attracting Hoosier visitors and tourists from all over the world who have learned of its picturesque charm, and its historical and romantic background.

In the 165 years since it was founded, the Conner trading post and the handsome brick mansion which supplanted it have been the scenes of some of the most unusual events in pioneer Indiana.

A Shawnee Indian raid into the Lehigh Valley of eastern Pennsylvania during the French and Indian War led to the capture of 6-year-old Margaret Boyer. Exploring in eastern Ohio in 1767, a young Ulsterman named Richard Conner found the little white captive and paid the Shawnee $200 for her release. But he also was compelled to promise that their first-born son would be surrended to the Shawnee for adoption.

After conducting a sort of frontier inn among the Shawnee, the Conners spent the winter of 1774 at Fort Pitt (Pittsburgh), at that time a small Pennsylvania settlement of 30 houses. They immediately returned to the Tuscarawas and upper Muskingum Valley in Ohio to help found Moravian missions for conversion of Delaware Indians to Christianity.

Their son, James Conner, was restored to them in 1776 for $40 ransom. John was born in Ohio in 1775, and then William was born, probably in 1777.

By 1750 the Ohio Valley and the country around the Great Lakes had become the refuge of many Indian tribes. They had been pushed westward across the Alleghenies by the costal colonies. The Delaware and Shawnee sought new lands in the open country: After being driven from the Susquehanna, the Wyandots occupied the western end of Lake Erie.

The British were determined, after losing the American Revolution, to erect a stockade of terror and harrassment which would confine the American colonies to the Atlantic seaboard. They hired Indian mercenaries and renegades to conduct this campaign, and no froniter cabin or settlement was safe.

The Conner family was captured at Salem, Ohio, in 1781 along with 400 Moravian-converted Indians. They were taken on a brutal march to Detroit. Accused of giving aid to the Americans, they were tried by a British military court, which decided to divide them. The Indians were permitted to filter back into Ohio. The Conner family was transported north of Detroit on the Clinton River, near the present community of Mt. Clemens.

The four Conner sons and their sister grew up in Michigan among the Chippewa. They learned the three Delaware dialects and also Chippewa, Shawnee and Wyandot. They were accepted by numerous tribes as virtual Indians, and were formally adopted by the Shawnee.

In 1796 John and William Conner ventured into the wild Saginaw region as fur traders. They were quickly successful. But there more Indians and therefore more furs farther south.

In 1880 William went into Indiana. The next year he married Mekinges, daughter of the Delaware chief William Anderson, who lived near the present Madison County seat of Anderson.

Instructions to young William Henry Harrison as Govenor of the new Indiana Territory were to roll back all Indians, to exterminate hostile Indians, and to make the expanding frontier safe for settlement. He was to use persuasion instead of force whenever possible. The federal government hoped the Treaty of

(Continued on page 15)

Fisher Antiques

2739 College 234-8629

Featuring

Furniture — Cut Glass

Pressed Glass — China

Lamps

Peasant Craft Toys

OPEN

By chance or appointment

Norman and Dorothy Fisher

(Continued from page 13)

Greenville, negotiated n 1795 after Wayne's victory at Fallen Timber, would be recognized by all Indians as the better course.

Fur trading eventually gave way to settlements. But since fur trading was essential to good Indian relations, Harrison felt it was better to have more of the fur trade in American hands instead of British. When William Conner asked for a trader's license Harrison promptly granted it. He already knew John Conner and had used him to sound out Tecumseh, who had become leader of the Miami Confederacy after Pontiac and Little Turtle. Now Harrison could utilize also the special position which William Conner would occupy as Chief Anderson's son-in-law.

Harrison between 1800 and 1809 negotiated treaties with various tribes, which presumed to transfer legal title to most of Indiana. Younger and more belligerent Indians objected to this loss of millions of acres. They were particularly aroused by the Treaty of Ft. Wayne in 1809, charging a "sellout" by their chiefs.

The British continued to incite the Indians to frontier terrorism. Two Shawnee—Tecumseh and his half-brother, The Prophet—became convinced that war was inevitable. Tecumseh so informed Harrison when he made a special trip to Vincennes for a showdown.

In all this the two Conner brothers played an almost unique role. William now referred to himself as a Delaware. They both spoke the Indian languages and could look like Indians and think like Indians. Yet they were devout Moravians and ardent Masons and regarded themselves as outposts of white civilization.

After a trip to Washington, D. C., the year before, John Conner in 1803, established a log store at Cedar Grove, south of the present city of Brookville. Like William, he too had an Indian wife and halfbreed children. John also built a log house, gristmill and sawmill in Franklin County.

A route known as The Conner Trail was established from William's post 4 miles south of the present Noblesville to John's store on Cedar Creek. Ponies carried furs via the present communities of Anderson and New Castle, and then they would be sent by water from Cedar Creek to Cincinnati and New Orleans. The return cargo was goods from John's store to be traded by brother William.

Another branch of The Conner Trail led from Williams post to Ft. Wayne and Detroit. As British pressure mounted it declined.

The Treaty of Grouseland in 1805 opened up the Twelve Mile Purchase. John moved to the present site of Connerville in 1808 being one of the first five settlers in the neighborhood. He opened a second store there to pioneers.

By 1815 Franklin County, with 7,370 population, was second only to Knox in size. John Conner owned the buildings and 320 acres at Cedar Grove, 120 acres at Laurel on the west fork of the Whitewater (where the famous Wetzel Trace started), and the Connersville cabin, store and blockhouse.

William Conner built a two-room cabin and trading post in 1802 on land given to him by Chief Anderson. It was between the Indian villages of Upper Delaware Town and Lower Delaware Town, on the east bank of White River where periodic high waters had formed a prairie amid the heavy wilderness forests. He quickly built up a prospering fur trade, and also sent as far as New Orleans the corn whiskey made in his two-story log stillhouse. It was far easier to transport whisky than bulky corn, and throughout ~~pioneer~~ Indiana whisky was an important export.

Conner was known by the Indians as the most honest of all the traders. This was in contrast to the many cheats and swindlers who robbed the Indians, abused their women, and drove them off their land.

A schedule of prices paid by William Conner includes these items: raccoon skins 37½ to 40c; wildcat, fisher and fox 50c to 67c; mink 50c. deer or buckskin $1; bear or otter $4 to $5. Conner and his helpers dressed, stretched and bundled the furs, and then packed them off on ponies on The Conner Trail.

William Conner continued in the fur business from 1802 to 1823, when the supplying of settlers wants became more profitable.

The pioneer advance affected everybody. The Conner brothers gradually changed from sons of the wilderness to fathers of the new State of Indiana. Their advice and friendship were eagerly sought. They acted as interpreters when another treaty was negotiated at Greenville (Ohio) in 1814, when the four treaties resulting in The New Purchase were executed at St. Mary's (Ohio) in 1818, and when the two Treaties of Mississinewa were negotiated in 1826.

William Conner helped Chief Anderson persuade 400 Delaware braves to reject Tecumseh's pleas that they join his preparations for the War of 1812. John Conner was Harrison's scout at the Battle of Tippecanoe, (1811) and William Conner was Col. John Campbell's chief scout at the Battle of Mississinewa, (1812) near the present city of Marion.

William Conner also was with Harrison at Fort Meigs in 1813. He helped to identify the body of Tecumseh when Harrison broke the power of the Northwest Territory Indians at the Battle of the Thames in Ontario on Oct. 15, 1813.

These operations on land by Harrison and Johnson's Kentuckians, and Admiral Perry's marine victories on Lake Erie, did much to secure the west for the new nation. The Conner brothers were at Greenville when the United States made its major peace with the Indians on July 22, 1814. The War of 1812 was formally concluded at the Treaty of Ghent on Dec. 24, 1814.

When John Conner's wife died, he married Lavina Winship (he was 38 and she was 25) on March 13, 1813. He built a new two-room cabin for her at Connersville, 60 miles up the Whitewater Trail from Cincinnati. When William visited John he was astonished at the different atmosphere when the housewife was not a squaw.

Franklin was one of the seven original Indiana counties, with Wayne and Dearborn counties it formed the Whitewater Coalition that helped Johathan Jennings win as the State of Indiana's first Governor. Just as the Conner brothers were able to retain the friendship of both the Indians and the white settlers, so they were friendly with both Jennings and Harrison, who were arch political rivals.

John Conner was elected from Franklin County as one of the 10-man Indiana Senate when it first convened in 1817. When he succeeded in getting Fayette County formed from Franklin in 1818, he was appointed Fayette's first sheriff. And the new county seat for Fayette was Connersville!

The Delaware had agreed by treaty in 1818 to sell all their lands to the State of Indiana. Mekinges and her six Conner children decided to accompany them westward to Missouri. William Conner had been unable to get clear title from the American government to his considerable Hamilton County holdings. What could he give her? Finally it was agreed that he buy 60 ponies for his departing wife, and she in turn promised to send their children back to visit him at intervals.

The Delaware started their pitiful departure in September, 1820. Turning his back at least part way on the past, William Conner on Nov. 30, 1820, married 17-year-old Elizabeth Chapman. She was 30 years his junior.

It was a civil ceremony, and one of the first marriages in the New Purchase. There was a big wedding feast, and not only the settlers but also Indians attended and remained at the Conner homestead several days.

The new wife had been born in New York, and then moved with her family to Connersvillle. In 1819 several families moved on to a prairie site between the Conner cabin and what is now Noblesville, traveling on horseback and by ox cart. William Conner immediately befriended the newcomers, and it was natural that he became acquainted with the Chapman girl.

In 1823 William Conner built a

(Continued on page 17) Missing

Conner Family

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1972

Conner Prairie Pioneer Village To Be Expanded

Pioneer, Ind.

By HOWARD STEVENS

Tribune State Editor

INDIANAPOLIS (Special) — There's good news for school kids and Hoosier tourists — Conner Prairie Pioneer settlement near here is going to get a face lifting.

Owned by Earlham College, extensive plans to expand facilities at the settlement were announced by the college and Myron Vourax, director of the historic site.

Restoration of the homesite of William Conner, early pioneer settler in Indiana, was initiated many years ago by the former owner, Eli Lilly of Indianapolis, who, in 1964, presented it to Earlham College to be operated as a permanent historical museum, open to the public.

During the past seven years, Earlham has maintained the property, providing guided tours through the restored brick, two-story mansion built by William Conner in 1823, and several log buildings on the homestead including a milk house, still house, loom house, log cabin and a trading post. A schoolhouse, built in the early 1800s, recently was added to the property.

Located six miles north of I-465 on the Allisonville Road, the unique exhibits of the early 19th Century at Conner Prairie have attracted many school groups from Indianapolis and nearby Noblesville, in addition to civic organizations and tourists from all parts of the United States.

Due to increasing interest in the restored area, members of the Conner Prairie Advisory Council and Earlham College officials decided to expand the operation to include not only the history of William Conner's activities during the early pioneer days but to acquire and assemble other authentic period buildings from areas in Indiana to "tell the story" of the early migration of settlers to the Hoosier state from 1775 to 1860.

Recent acquisitions related to the expansion program include seven buildings, a blacksmith shop and a covered bridge, some of which already have been carefully dismantled, moved and rebuilt at Conner Prairie.

Dr. Henry Glassie, assistant professor of folklore at Indiana University and an authority on log buildings, is working closely with the expansion project, along with Roll McLaughlin of Indianapolis, an expert on historical architecture, and Sam Ritter of Noblesville, who is responsible for the physical construction of the buildings.

According to Director Myron Vourax, when the proposed project is completed, Conner Prairie Settlement will offer visitors not only the "sights" of early pioneer life but also the "sounds, smell and touch" of the bygone era.

"There is much to be done," Vourax says, "but, with the timetable we have worked out, most of the expansion program will be completed within three years."

A nature area, containing live animals native to central Indiana during the pioneer era, is planned sometime in the future as an added feature to the Conner Prairie Settlement.

Copy – to McDonnell
to Mrs. Hord.

Conner Family

Conner Prairie:

To Relive
To Remake
To Revive

by Paul Barada

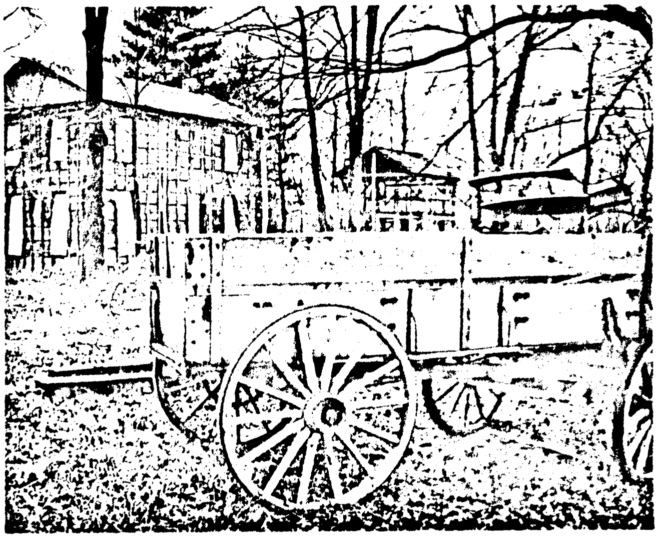
Over the years it seems people have come to think of the prairie as a vanishing existence. But just north of Indianapolis "the prairie" has not vanished. To the contrary, it's growing.

Programs are now underway to develop further the 1400 acres known as the **Conner Prairie Pioneer Settlement.** Of this total, approximately 194 acres are being devoted to prairie land, just as William Conner must have seen it during the early part of the nineteenth century.

Already a well known tourist attraction and center for historical research, Conner Prairie is currently engaged in a three year program to expand the existing facilities from 10 to 30 buildings; each represents specific aspects characteristic of the various life styles in pioneer Indiana.

Conner Prairie, which was opened on a limited basis in 1964, is the result of a generous gift to Earlham College by Eli Lilly, grandson of the founder of Eli Lilly & Co. The land which is now being developed was purchased by Lilly in 1934, and for many years was the site of his summer house, called "The Chinese House."

The purpose of the Conner Prairie Pioneer Settlement is to preserve history—***to relive, to remake, to revive*** the history of Indiana and the old Northwest territory on a scale unknown in the Midwest. As Myron Vourax, director of the settlement stated in a recent newspaper interview, "We don't want to be merely the stewards of early artifacts, but re-creators of a way of life. To really experience history, a visitor to a development like ours



The top picture is the William Conner home. Built in 1823 the home overlooks a 200 acre prairie.

The center picture features a portrait of William Conner (1777-1885) which hangs in the Conner home.

The bottom picture shows restoration in progress. One of the cabins that is being constructed on the grounds at Conner Prairie.

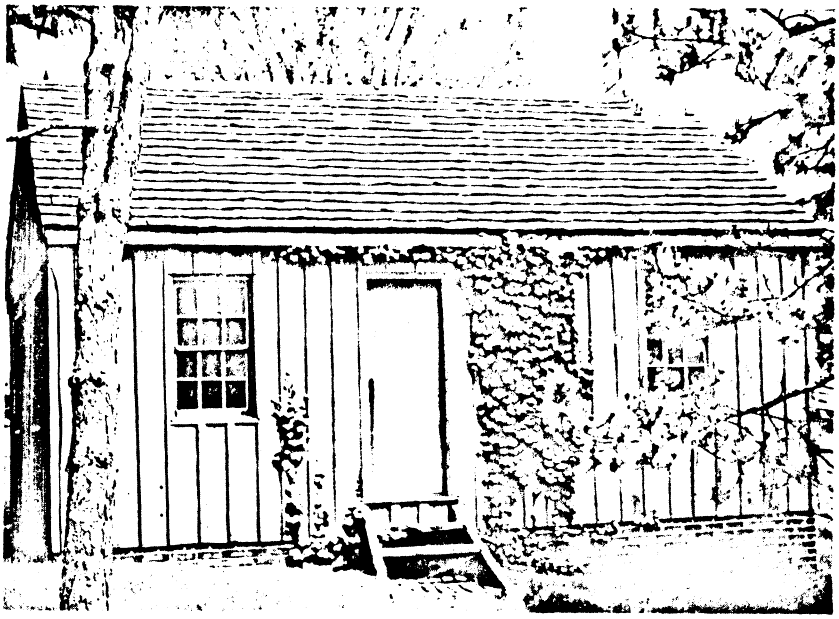
must be exposed to the period with all his senses." This means hearing the sounds from an early blacksmith shop, feeling the rough hewn logs that were used to make a wagon bridge, smelling the odors from the cider mill, and looking at the authentic furnishings in William Conner's 1823 mansion.

The rustic setting of Conner Prairie characterizes the rigorous, rugged pioneer life. As Vourax points out, "We are extremely fortunate to have such an ideal location for the settlement. Not only are we situated on historical ground, but the land surrounding us has been developed effectively." This means that there isn't much land left for the hot dog vendor and the souvenir stand. "That's just the way we want it," Vourax continued. "Too many other valuable historical sites have already been lost to the huckster and the speculator."

Under the guidance of Earlham College and Vourax, Conner Prairie is gaining greater significance than just another tourist attraction. According to Ransom Lindsey, educational curator of Conner Prairie, "When we get underway, the fellow pounding the anvil in the blacksmith shop may be working for his master's degree." With an emphasis on authenticity, Conner Prairie is becoming not only a spot for sightseers, but a valuable resource for scholars and historians.

The outline for Conner Prairie includes some new concepts for other historical restoration. One of the most refreshing ideas is the plan for a "parking garden." Instead of leveling a patch of woods for an asphalt parking lot, plans call for the selective removal of only 10% of the trees in the parking area. Small parking areas throughout the patch of woods will be asphalted to accommodate visitors. From a short distance away the parking area will not even be visible, thus avoiding the shopping center look.

From the parking garden to the complex visitors will follow not asphalt or concrete walkways but dirt paths, just as early pioneers did. Once in the complex, visitors will have the opportunity to experience unique aspects of life in early Indiana. Again quoting Myron Vourax, "People get the impression that everybody in early Indiana lived in a mansion like William Conner's. Many people of that period never had more than a crude log cabin;



The Conner Loom House. Such buildings housed the first industries in central Indiana.

some had frame houses, and even fewer had large houses resembling William Conner's." This element of the pioneer socio-economic structure will be accurately portrayed in Conner Prairie. There will be examples that invite visitors' comparison between the kind of life that went on in one district and that which constituted a separate part of the settlement. For example, in one section of the settlement will be a replica of a crude log cabin and in another part of the complex will be examples of how more prosperous pioneers lived. Conner Prairie shows what trades these pioneers practiced and how successful men like William Conner lived and worked.

In addition, visitors will also see how each of these economic levels were interrelated: how the poor settler traded his furs and crops to the cabinet maker for a table and some chairs, how the cabinet maker sold his goods to the large landowners; in other words, how all levels of pioneer society had to depend on the others to get along.

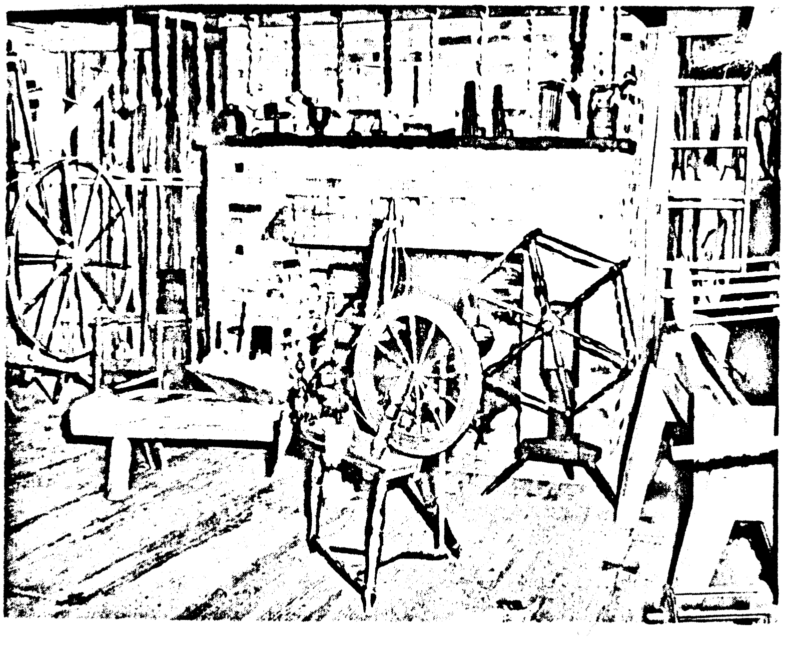
Conner Prairie tells the importance of transportation to the early Hoosiers. Visitors will be able to take a ride along the edge of the prairie in an authentic Conestoga wagon to a settler's landing on the banks of the Wapihani River. (Today the Wapihani is known as the White River.) This area will contain a trading post, trappers' cabins and other structures appropriate to the time. From the landing, visitors will be able to take a flatboat ride down the White River.

Other activities recreated at Conner Prairie will include barrel-making, weaving, and various other crafts that were necessary to pioneer life. A local doctor's office and early school house are being constructed in the complex. Plans also call for the return of live buffalo to the settlement.

The restoration program is progressing and steadily generating interest and support. Some have even donated authentic cabins that they have on their property. Vourax isn't taking this kind of generosity lightly either. If the cost isn't prohibitive, he plans to use a helicopter to fly in these gifts.

When it's finished, it's been projected that *Conner Prairie will be the only major restoration of its kind in the Midwest and one of the few "living" historical sites in the country.*

Interior of the Conner Loom House.



The Indianapolis Times

Our Town

"Period Piece"

By ANTON SCHERRER

A natural law based on biology accounts for people with secondary activities. Accident has nothing to do with it. Such is the simple conclusion—with arresting implications—when one examines the several generations of the Lilly family and the hobbies they pursue. Josiah Kirby Lilly, for example, has achieved international fame because of his collection of Stephen Foster memorabilia.

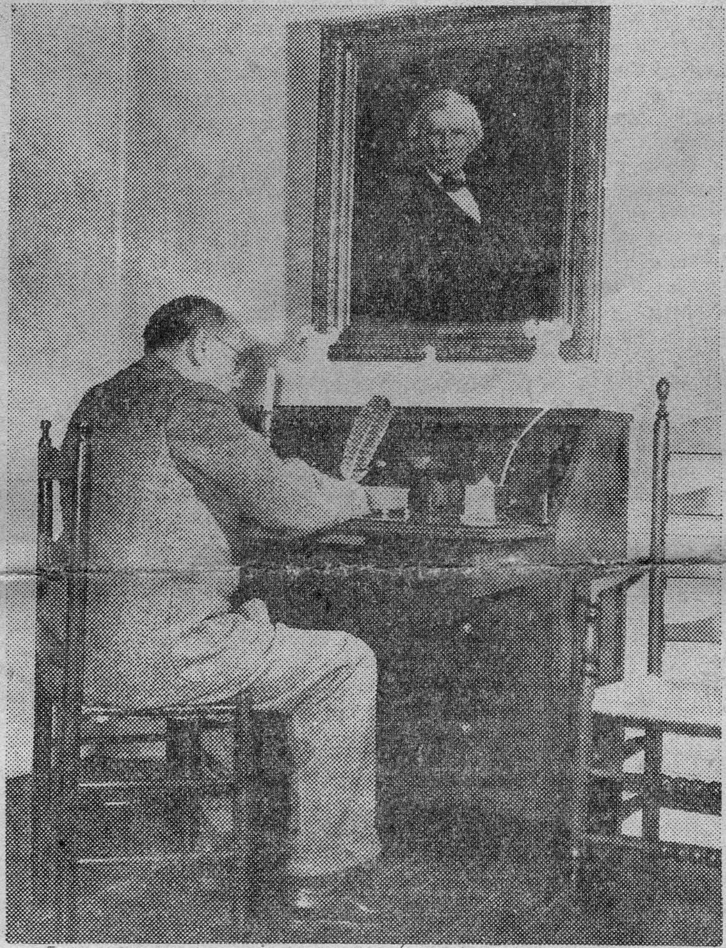
And because of consanguinity, his two sons follow in his footsteps. J. K. Jr. goes in for first editions and Eli plays with a period piece in the shape of a farm in Hamilton county. As for the boy's grandfather, he collected marbles when he was a kid. The Lillys can't help it; they are collectors because they were born that way. It's as simple as that.

Coincidence of Dates

Eli Lilly acquired his farm in 1935, almost immediately after the U. S. sumpreme court held that congress was within its power in abrogating the gold clause in private contracts. The curious coincidence of dates has led some people to believe that Mr. Lilly turned farmer in order to keep alive. Nonsense! Mr. Lilly had his collector's eye peeled on this particular farm long before the Democrats got around to monkeying with the dollar. Moreover, there isn't any reason to believe that Mr. Lilly had to leave Marion county to keep alive. So much for the legened that Mr. Roosevelt was also responsible for Mr. Lilly's hobby. A shrewder guess is that Mr. Lilly turned farmer because of his affiliation with the Indiana Historical society.

Only 999 Knew

Mr. Lilly's farm is 16 miles north of the Circle by way of Rd. 13. Hamiltonians, proud as Punch, refer to it as four miles south of Noblesville. More specifically, it lies on a high bank overlooking the wide expanse of rich bottom lands bordering White river. When Mr. Lilly bought the farm, the soil looked as good as anything in the Middle West. What didn't look so good was the set of buildings that went with it. Because of the anomaly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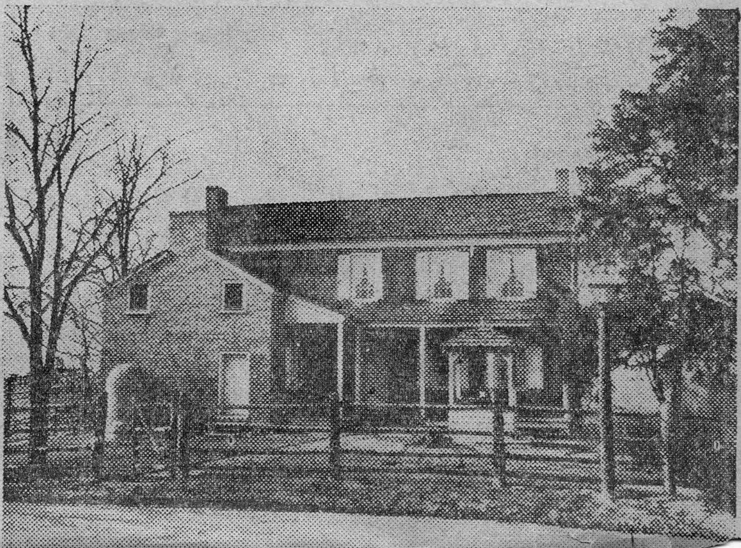
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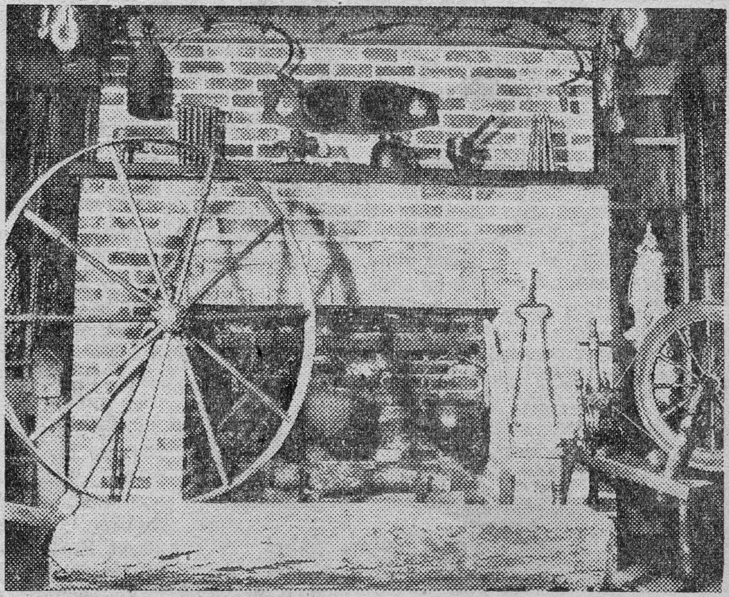
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(Photos by Victor Peterson.)

sion met to select a site upon which to set a state capital to be

1. The portrait over the desk at which Eli Lilly is writing is that of William Conner, the subject of this series. It was painted by Jacob

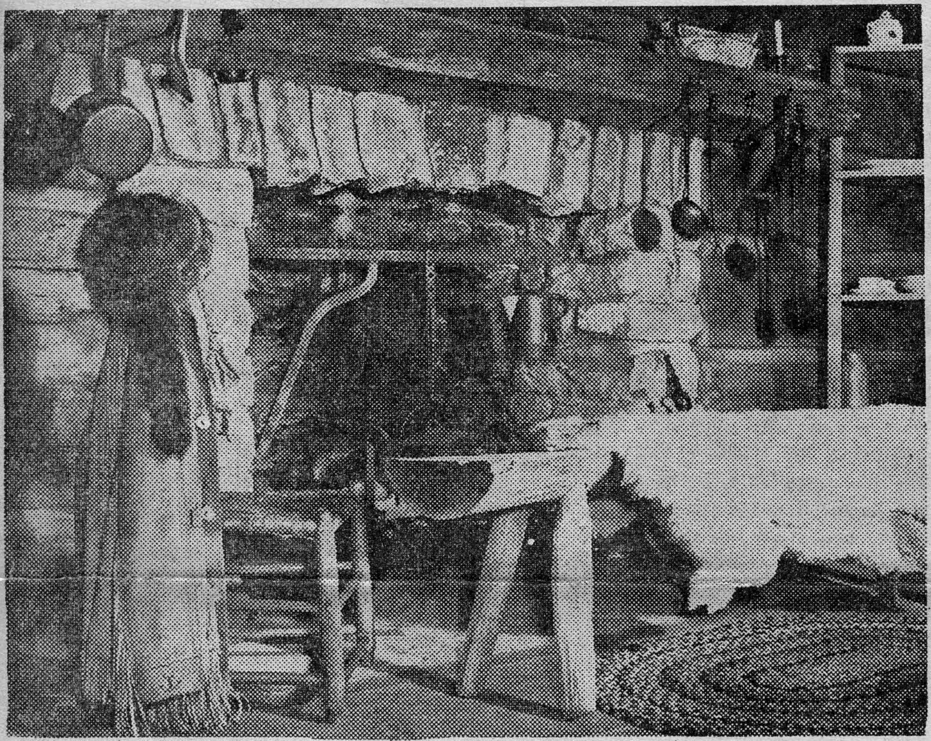
stead of the healthy hills around Waverly has worried a lot of peo-

The Indianapolis Times

Our Town

"Period Piece"

By ANTON SCHERRER



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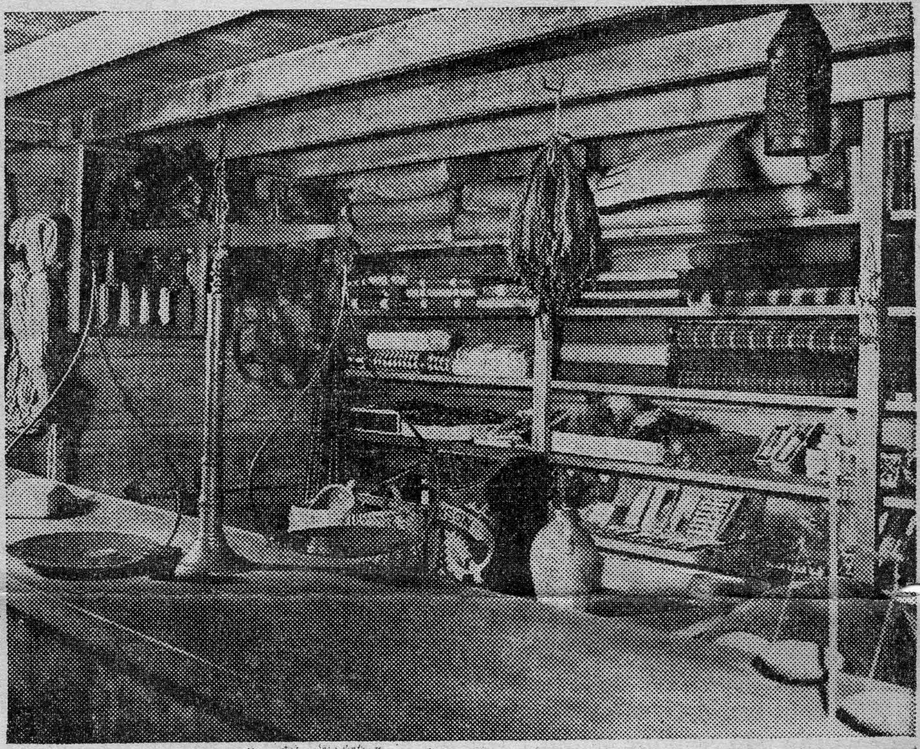

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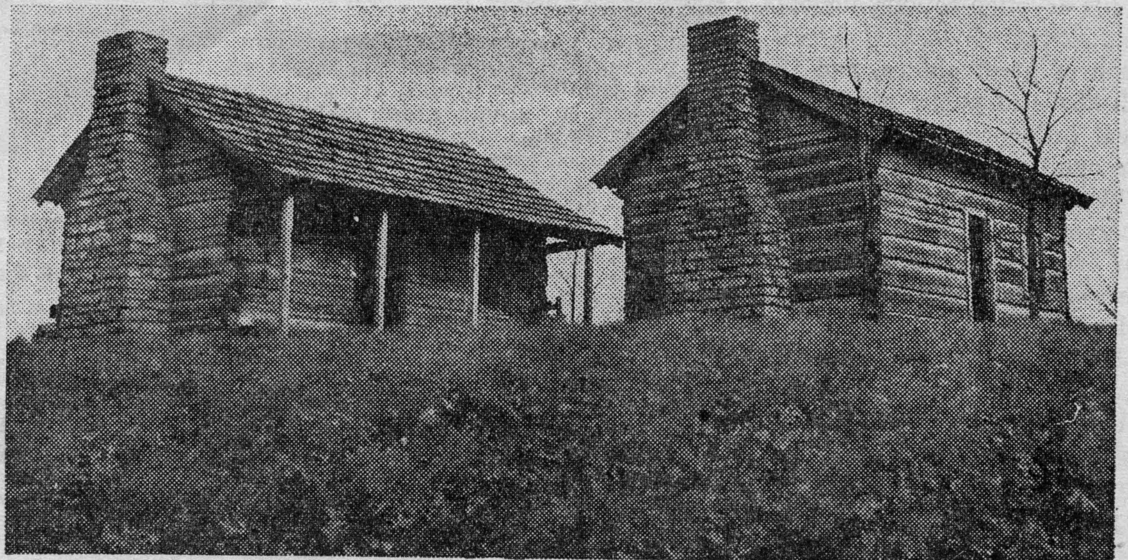
(Photos by Victor Peterson.)

NUMBER TWO

William Conner might have passed for an Indian when he established a trading post in 1802 on what is now Eli Lilly's farm. For one thing, he was the husband of Chief Anderson's daughter, and like most men who want to make a go of marriage, he, too, adopted the ways of his wife's family. But that wasn't the only reason. His 28 years of bachelorhood had something to do with it. And so did Richard and Margaret.

The little that we know of Richard Conner and Margaret Boyer has come to us by way of Charles N. Thompson whose "Sons of the Wilderness" beats anything written by James Fenimore Cooper. Mr. Thompson starts his story sometime around 1763 when Richard Conner, a young Marylander, was roaming the Ohio country. What business he had there is unknown. He may have been a fur trader or an agent for the Indian traders operating out of Lancaster, Pa.



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1. Interior of William Conner's restored cabin, the shack in which the commission met, in 1820, to select a site for the permanent capital of Indiana, a town to be known hereafter as "Indianapolis." The Indian garment draped over the chair is a realistic reminder that William Conner was the husband of Mekinges, a daughter of Chief Anderson.

2. Interior of Conner's restored trading post, a store established in 1802 on what is now Eli Lilly's farm. Mr. Conner made his living as a fur trader. The Indians got from 50 to 67 cents for fox and wild cat skins; deer or buck skins brought $1.00 each; otter and full grown bear skins brought as high as $5 each. The prices quoted are taken from "Sons of the Wilderness," the extraordinary account of the Connor boys, written by Charles N. Thompson.

3. William Conner lived in a double cabin trading post. The shack at the left is the restored trading post. The architectural arrangement of cabin and store is typical of such establishments in the Middle West around 1800. (By Victor Peterson.)

the region now within the state of Indiana. In 1800, or thereabouts, he arrived at the mouth of Fall creek on White river, a crossing point for many trails where Indians were likely to congregate. Legend has it that he got wind of the place because of a French trader doing business there. No doubt William's repertoire also included French. As for John—the other Conner connected with early Indianapolis—he left the paternal homestead after William did. Anyway, John was a couple of years younger.

Which still leaves unanswered just what it was that brought two of the Conner boys to the wilderness now known as Indiana. Says the dependable Mr. Thompson: "It is no more apparent from the written records why John and William Conner came ultimately to Indiana than it is why their father emigrated from Maryland to Ohio. There may have been the same desire for adventure and new scenes. There may have been another reason in the case of the sons . . . both were married to Delaware Indian wives. Is it not likely that these women were friends of an earlier day, perhaps of their childhood in Ohio, and that they sought them out in the White river country to which the Delaware came after the Treaty of Greenville? A less romantic pos-

He may even have been a prisoner and adopted into some tribe of Indians as were many white men of this time. Whatever his status, Richard Conner had an Irishman's proverbial luck. While with the Shawnee, he ran across a beautiful white girl living with the Indians. Her name was Margaret Boyer.

According to a tradition handed down in the Conner family, Margaret was a little six-year-old girl living with her parents in Pennsylvania when she was taken captive by the Indians. The Indians got her sister, too. Their father was in the field when his sharp ears heard the Indians creeping up. He hid the children and swam a river to call for help. As he climbed the opposite bank he was shot and killed. The Indians found the children and sneaked away with them. They would. When Margaret's sister grew up, she married an Indian chief. As for Margaret herself, she married Richard Conner.

Promised His Son

To marry Margaret, Richard had to meet two onerous conditions. First of all, the chief of the tribe demanded $200, a huge amount of money for a man who had yet to make his fortune. On top of which Richard had to promise to deliver his first-born son to the Indians — for keeps, mind you.

After their marriage the Conners lived for a time with the Shawnee. A little later, in 1772, they were established in—believe it or not—a place called Connerstown! Richard's readiness to name a Shawnee town for himself was not merely an assertion of his Irish ancestry. It was a proclamation of fatherhood — by this time the Conners' first baby had arrived. He was named James. Pursuant to the terms of the marriage contract, James was delivered to the Indians.

Not to keep you in suspense any longer than necessary, let me hurry to add that James was restored to his parents in 1776. This time the price was $40. The head of the 5-year-old boy was shaved like that of an Indian when his mother saw him again,

Directed Future

Upon his return, James discovered that he had two little brothers to play with. The older of the two was William—the same William Conner who, 47 years later, entertained the commission sent by the legislature to select a site for the permanent capital of Indiana, a town to be known as "Indianapolis." The other brother was John Conner who was one of the party entertained by William in 1820. If you can't keep up with me today it's because you didn't buy yesterday's paper.

After John's birth the Richard Conners had two more children, but only one more son—Henry. He was the only one of the four Conner boys to have blond hair. This time Mother Conner asserted herself. Margaret Boyer's name was a phonetic rendering of Beyer or Bayer. So much for Mr. Thompson's genealogical discovery that the Conner boys were a blend of Gallic and Teutonic strains.

When James, the first-born, was restored to his parents in 1776, the Conners were living in Schoenbrunn ("Beautiful Spring"), an Ohio town founded in 1772 by the Pennsylvania Christian Indians under the leadership of the Moravian missionaries. The greatest of the missionaries was the Rev. David Zeisberger, a man of extraordinary ability, power and devotion. It was he, more than anybody else, who directed the future of the Conners. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that the fortune and fate of the Conners parallels that of David Zeisberger —at any rate for a dozen or more years.

Before he met the Conners, David Zeisberger had helped to found Nazareth and Bethlehem, the two Pennsylvania towns where they still sing the German hymns he introduced 200 years ago. After that he gave all his time to ministering to the Indians—first among the Delawares and then among the Iroquois. In 1772, he explored the Muskingum region in the present state of Ohio, where he ran across the Conners living with the Shawnee. After Schoenbrunn, two more towns were built in this region. It was a task fraught with peril and pain. Zeisberger's missionary work was one of heartbeats and heartbreaks, of suffering and celebration, of victory and surrender, in all of which the Conners participated.

'Sons of Wilderness'

The climax came in 1781. When the hot flame of the Revolution was fanned by the Indians of the Ohio valley, the Conners with the Moravian Christian Indians were captured by hostile tribes and driven off to Detroit with great cruelty. After "standing trial" there before the British commander, the Moravians with a very few Christian Indians were allowed to settle on Clinton river, some 20 miles north of Detroit. True to their faith in Zeisberger, the Conners joined the settlement in 1783, the year Susanna was born. She was the last of the Conner children.

When the Michigan settlement was abandoned in 1786, James was 15, William 13, John 11 and Henry 6 years old. They were "Sons of the Wilderness" who had spent their entire childhood among the Indians. Their father and mother, both adopted members of the Shawnee tribe, had taught them its language. By way of the Moravian missionaries they heard German and English. Hymns were sun in German. At one time or another, the boys were neighbors of other Indian tribes. All of which explains why, in the course of time, all four Conner boys became well-known Indian interpreters. Mr. Thompson says that to this day there is a tradition in and around Mt. Clemens, Mich., that the Conner boys dressed, acted and talked like Indians.

On top of their linquistic accomplishments, the Conner boys also had learned the secrets of the forest—straight from the Indians themselves. They knew their way around. And because Detroit had been coveted by three nations for its strategic position in the fur trade, they learned the market price of pelts. All of which ought to be enough to explain why some of the Conner boys made their way in the world as fur traders.

Followed Fur Trade?

It is generally believed that William Conner was 19 years old when he went into business for himself—first in the Saginaw country in Michigan and later in

sibility is that the Conners followed the friendly tribe of Indians whose language and customs they knew so well for the purpose of trade and that they intermarried in the tribe to facilitate their trading operations—a custom quite common among the traders and not wholly unknown today."

Jefferson's Blessing

Right here it may not be amiss to note that the Indian marriages of William and John Conner had Thomas Jefferson's blessing. In support of which there is a Jefferson letter in the course of which he said: "The ultimate point of rest and happiness for them (the Indians) is to let our settlements and theirs meet and blend together, to intermix and become one people."

In the summer of 1802, William Conner established himself and his Indian wife on land four miles south of what is now Noblesville. He had been attracted there during his wanderings, especially by the fertility of the soil and the abundance of game for food and fur. Here, on what is now Eli Lilly's farm, he set up shop as a fur trader. Years later he told how "on a beautiful moonlight night, Aug. 12, 1802 . . . with only the aid of a French-Canadian," he finished the roof of his log cabin.

This was the dwelling destined to become "Conner's Trading Post." In the course of less than 20 years it became the principal market place of the "new country"—the rendezvous of travelers, of wayfarers and settlers, of Indians and whites. Indeed, it became a landmark with the result that the legislature picked it in 1820 for the meeting place of the commission whose duty it was to select a site for the permanent capital of Indiana, a town to be known hereafter as "Indianapolis." Little did William Conner realize that "moonlight night" that some day somebody like Eli Lilly would come along and preserve it as a consecrated shrine.

(Continued Tomorrow)

—the fertile fields of the one hand and the shabby buildings on the other—the critics had a tough time appraising Mr. Lilly's purchase. They didn't know whether to applaud or to feel sorry for him—assuming, of course, that there is such a thing as a critic human enough to experience sorrow.

The pay-off came when it was learned that Mr. Lilly had picked up not merely a farm, but a period piece including the William Conner house, a secret shared at the time by only 999 people (excluding Mr. Lilly). Sure, the members of the Indiana Historical society.

Virtues and Vices

The William Conner house was the first (1823) brick house erected in the "New Purchase," a connotation handed down to designate the lands relinquished by the Delaware Indians, the tribe that ran the central part of what is now known as Indiana. Nor was that all. Mr. Lilly's purchase also included the ruins of an ancient milk house and something that looked like a loom house, symbols of old ancestral virtues. As for the old ancestral vices, they were represented by what looked like the ruins of a real-for-sure whisky still.

Since acquiring his fabulous property, Mr. Lilly has spent all his spare time restoring the buildings—even to the point of equipping them with tools and furniture of the period. The loom house, for example, is prepared to deliver homespun, and the milk house goes its own sweet way, udderly unmindful of how the world is behaving today. And except for one little detail, the whisky house would be a going concern, too. My discovery that the distilling vessel is without a bottom is accounted for by the fact that certain people in Washington don't share Mr. Lilly's enthusiasm for early Americana.

A Tale of Romance

The story of the old brick house on the place is a tale of romance, chivalry and adventure. For that reason it deserves a chapter of its own. It will appear, God willing, when I feel like it; or better still, when it takes its chronological place in Mr. Conner's life. Today it is sufficient to say that the restored Conner house is unlike anything in Indiana, not only because of its great age, but also because of its extraordinary beauty. The skill with which it has been restored, the discovery that plumbing adds nothing to the dignity of living, and the scrupulous insistence on the preservation of fundamental virtues leave one quite bewildered —especially one like me who has been brought up to believe (mostly by way of Southern novels) that the ancestral farm serves only as a convenient background for the depiction of incest and murder.

That leaves me to dispose of Mr. Lilly's fertile fields. Well, believe it or not, Mr. Lilly's farm turned out to be sacred ground—the exact spot where the commis-

as Indianapolis, a story I am prepared to tell today.

Cox, the first artist of any prominence in Indianapolis. Mr. Conner was somewhere around 80 years old when it was painted.

2. The entrance side of the restored Conner "mansion," the first (1823) brick house built in the "New Purchase." Note the "bee-hive" oven at the extreme left of the kitchen wing; also the well house at the right.

3. Interior of the restored loom house showing some of the paraphernalia with which Mr. Lilly has equipped the room.

4. Interion of the restored whisky still. The expression of expectancy on the face of one of the spectators was changed to one of chagrin when he learned that the distilling vessel was without a bottom. The unperturbed spectator is Eli Lilly.

'Conner's Prairie'

On Jan. 11, 1820, the legislature (operating in Corydon at the time) appointed 10 commissioners to select a site for the permanent capital of Indiana. The same law required them to meet at "the house of William Conner on the west fork of White river" at a place known as "Conner's Prairie," a trading post established in 1802. That is why Mr. Lilly's stationery (for his secondary activity) carries the name of "The Conner Prairie Farm." Except for you and me, nobody knows that Eli Lilly runs a farm.

Of course the "house" referred to in the law wasn't the big beautiful brick house I just got done raving about. The original Conner house was a typical pioneer's cabin. Mr. Lilly has reconstructed the cabin as well as the trading post. Inside and out, both establishments look like the real thing. In the cabin over the back of a chair hangs an Indian woman's garment, a realistic reminder that William Conner was the husband of Mekinges, daughter of Chief Anderson. My weak eyes failed to detect anything in the cabin to show that Mr. Conner and his Indian wife were the parents of six children. Maybe the kids lived in a tent.

All Authentic

As for the reconstructed trading post, everything about it is authentic, too. On one wall hangs a gorgeous collection of pelts (assembled by the late Mr. Zierz of Ayres) to show that Mr. Conner made his living dealing in furs. At the other end of the same room is a counter backed by a battery of shelves laden with the articles the Indians got in exchange for their furs. The Indians got a square deal, said Mr. Lilly.

To continue from where a woman's garment threw me off the track:

The story of what happened at "Conner's Prairie" in 1820 has been transmitted to us by way of a journal kept by John Tipton, one of the 10 commissioners. According to this diary, Tipton with Governor Jennings and Commissioners Jesse B. Durham and Joseph Bartholomew reached Conner's trading post sometime around noon on May 22, the day set for the meeting. It took them six days to make the trip from southern Indiana. Upon their arrival they found Commissioners George Hunt, Stephen Ludlow, John Gilliland, Thomas Emmerson and John Conner (William's younger brother). Frederick Rapp of Posey county appeared the next day. That accounts for nine commissioners. William Prince of Gibson county never did show up.

Outsped Surveyors

On the 24th the commissioners met at "the mouth of Fall creek." The next three days were spent in exploration. They went down the river as far the Bluffs (Waverly), where the Whetzel family had settled the year before. On the 27th they made their decision in favor of the Fall creek basin. They waited 10 days, however, to write their report. The delay was occasioned by the fact that the commissioners worked faster than the surveyors.

On June 7, 1820, upon completion of the maps, the commissioners met in McCormick's cabin and wrote a report meticulously describing the boundary lines of the future Indianapolis. Unless you've been brought up to understand the idiom employed by surveyors, there's no way of telling that the selected site embraced 2560 acres. The site of McCormick's cabin is marked today by a big boulder. It's on the east side of the river, a short distance north of the Washington st. bridge.

Just why the commissioners picked the Fall creek basin in-

ple, including Charles N. Thompson, author of "Sons of the Wilderness." In his scholarly account of the Conner family, Mr. Thompson cites three points in favor of the basin: (1) The existence of Indian trails; (2) the possibility of establishing mills, and (3 rapid transportation by way of the river.

"The junction of Fall ireek and White river," says Mr. Thompson, "was the converging point of Indian trails from Vincennes, from the falls of the Ohio, from Whitewater, from the upper Delaware towns on White river and the Potawatomi and Miami towns on the Wabash." This fact "had a strong influence upon these men, who realized that the roads of the settlers would follow the trails for many years to come. In addition, there was a good fording place at this point for those seeking lands farther west. It may have been the fording place that attracted the Indians to it."

"Banks Too High"

The second point—that of water power—is self-evident. As for the third point, we have John Tipton's word for it that the commissioners dismissed the Bluffs because "the banks were too high to allow a convenient boat landing"—leaving us no alternative but to believe that the site of Indianapolis was chosen largely because of its proximity to water.

I have quoted Mr. Thompson at some length not only because of his penetrating logic but also because of his wry remark regarding the importance of a waterway for the capital of Indiana. In which connection Mr. Thompson said: "In less than 14 years William Conner was actually interested in promoting a railroad to Indianapolis."

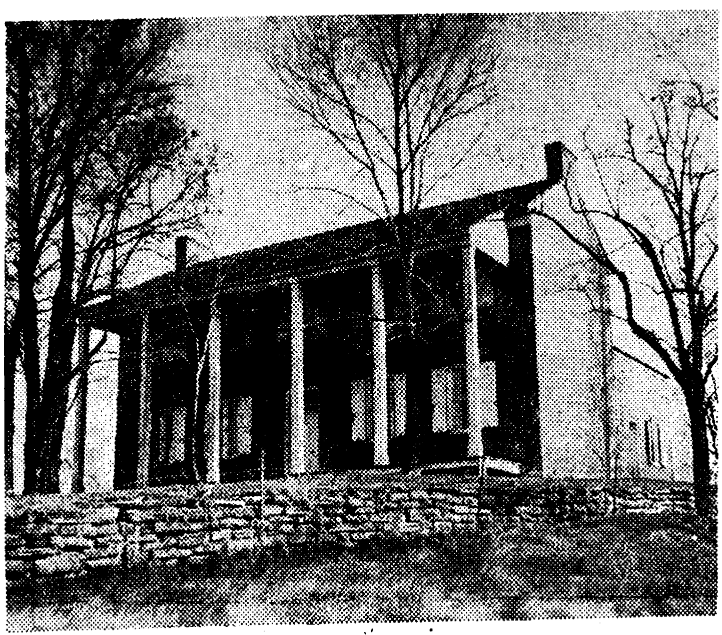
Thus proving again, if further proof is necessary, that nobody can look around a corner—not even men with the foresight of our ancestors.

The Indianapolis Times

Our Town

"Period Piece"

By ANTON SCHERRER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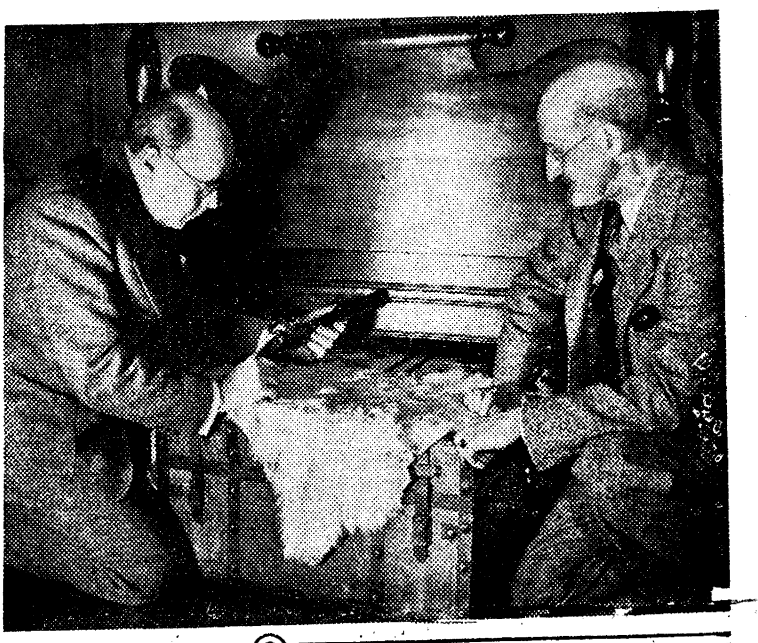
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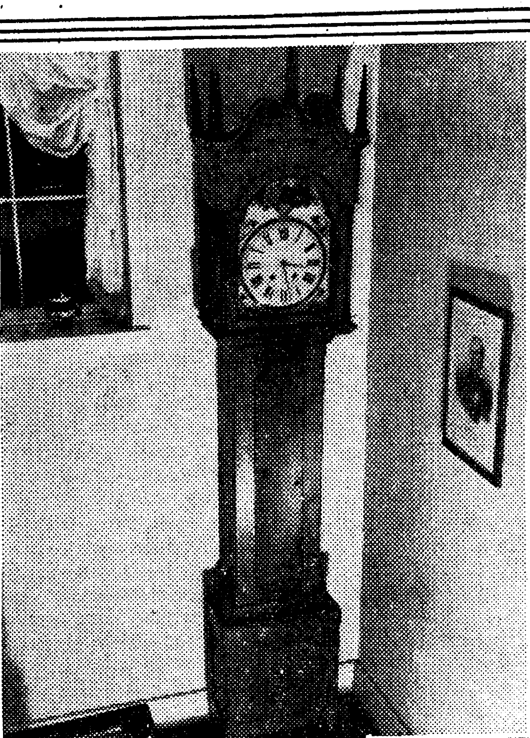
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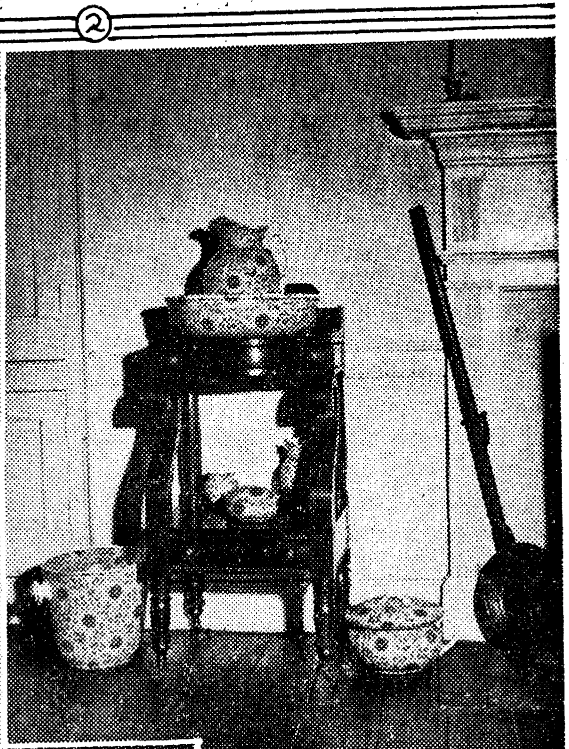
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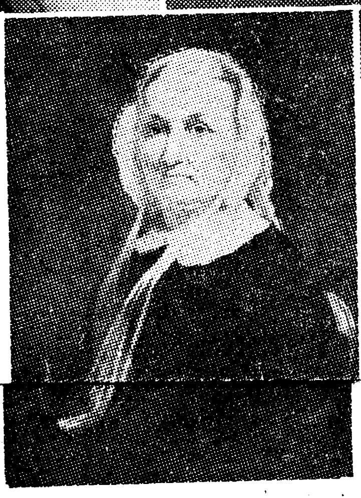
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Photos by Victor Peterson.

1—The west side of the restored Conner "mansion," the one with the beautiful (if anachronistic) porch added by Mr. Lilly.

2—William Conner kept his money under lock and key in a treasure chest at the foot of his bed. In this meditative picture, Eli Lilly is examining the gun which Mr. Conner always kept handy.

3—A glimpse from the stairway down from the second floor of the "mansion." The engraving on the wall is that of Henry Clay, the candidate William Conner picked to win the presidential election in 1824.

4—A still life of the Conners' plumbing equipment.

5—A portrait by Jacob Cox of Elizabeth Chapman, the aristocratic "comely and competent" white woman who at the age of 18 became the second Mrs. William Conner. She was probably 50 years old when this picture was painted.

NUMBER THREE

Today, if only for a moment, I want to touch upon a crisis in a love affair. Heaven help me to see it through without breaking down.

William Conner and his Delaware Indian wife, Mekinges, were the parents of six children. They answered to the names of Jack, Nancy, Harry, James, William and Eliza—four boys and two girls. The dates of their birthdays are unknown. This much is certain, however: All six children were present the day the commission met to select a site for the permanent capital of Indiana, a town to be known hereafter as "Indianapolis." The meeting, you may recall, took place on May 22, 1820, at Conner's trading post in a cabin located on what is now Eli Lilly's farm.

Two or three months later—after the commission had picked the Fall Creek basin as the site upon which to set Indianapolis—William Conner was alone without a wife and children. He knew that, sooner or later, it was going to happen. So did Mekinges. It was in the cards. The Delaware Indians who occupied this part of the country, previous to the "New Purchase," had agreed to leave Indiana not later than 1821. And because of a tribal law that the Indian wife must stay with her people, Mekinges had no alternative but to leave her husband. The Indians saw to it, too, that the children went with their mother.

Kept Their Promise

Sometime around the first of September, 1820, Mekinges and the six Conner children, the oldest of whom was possibly 18 years old, mounted their ponies and headed for the West. Mekinges was the best dressed woman in the outfit, says Charles N. Thompson, who knows practically everything there is to know about the Conners.

William Conner watched the cavalcade "until it was lost to view and the last bit of dust raised by the ponies' feet had sunk to the ground." A good part of the dust that day was raised by the hoofs of the 60 ponies Mekinges took with her. The herd of ponies together with the silver in her bag represented one-half of her husband's property at the time. The property settlement carried a stipulation, however—a promise on the part of Makinges to let the children come to see their father when circumstances would permit. Mekinges kept her promise.

Three months after the departure of his Indian wife and children, William Conner married again. This time it was Elizabeth Chapman, a "comely and competent" white woman, who was 30 years his junior. She was born in New York in the very month and year (1802) that Wililam Conner was building his cabin on White river. Her childhood had been spent in a sheltered home. She had been protected by her mother and her brother. She knew little, if anything, of the Indians or their ways. She had not even been a member of a crude pioneer settlement until she came to Connersville as part and parcel of John Finch's large family of children and stepchildren of which she was one.

"Saw a Good Deal"

On a trip to Connersville prior to 1820, William Conner became acquainted with John Finch and his surprisingly large family. They had been in Connersville for about two years and when Conner visited them, they talked earnestly of the possibilities of the White River country. In the spring of 1819 a group of Connersville families decided to move to the Horseshoe Prairie, a stretch of ground south of the present site of Noblesville and two or three miles north of Conner's trading post. All of which is set down to show that, maybe, William Conner saw a good deal of Elizabeth Chapman before his Indian wife and children left him.

In support of which I cite a dramatic passage in Charles N. Thompson's great book, "Sons of the Wilderness." It deals with William Conner's realization that Mekinges and the children would leave for the West with the Delawares, in obedience to the tribal law that the Indian wife must stay with her people:

"In a mood of meditation William Conner entered his cabin," says Mr. Thompson. "This was his home. Here he was destined to remain. His thoughts turned to the settlement on the Horseshoe Prairie. Upon the film of his vision appeared the trim, gracious figure of Elizabeth Chapman. How capable she had seemed in that household of little children in John Finch's home. With these reflections came the conclusion that his cabin was too old to serve much longer. Every year brought more travelers to his door and the number would increase with the coming of the state capital. His rough shack had been too small for his recent guests. He was sorry he could not have offered better lodgings to Governor Jennings. A new ambition stirred in the breast of William Conner. The opportunities and means for his metamorphosis were surely and steadily approaching."

Followed by Feast

The marriage of William Conner and Elizabeth Chapman took place in the cabin of John Finch on Horseshoe Prairie, Nov. 30, 1820. She was 18 years old; he, somewhere around 48. It was one of the first weddings—if not the very first—in the "New Purchase," and because the country known by that name had no justice of the peace at the time, Fielding Hazelrigg was brought from Connersville to perform the ceremony. (Except for the fact that Mr. Thompson's reputation for veracity is above suspicion, I'd swear that Fielding Hazelrigg's name is an invention of his.)

The ceremony was followed by a feast. In a piece of society reporting which can't be matched anywhere for realism Mr. Thompson says "Fowls were furnished by Jean Baptiste who lived near the trading post; fine fish from White river; roasted quail and pheasants and venison steaks. The sweets of the feast were wild plums and crabapples preserved in maple sugar, but the piece de resistance was bread made from wheat secured from 'over yonder in the Whitewater.' Up until then corn was the usual fare."

Mr. Thompson even reports the destination of the bride and groom after the wedding, which is more than modern reporters seem able to do. "After the feast, the bride and groom either forded or ferried across the river and rode horseback to Conner's cabin three miles away. Here Elizabeth Conner was installed as mistress of the combined dwelling and trading post which had been her husband's home for 18 years."

On Jan. 4, 1823 (more than two years after their marriage), William Conner's first child by Elizabeth Chapman was born. She received the name of Lavina. Her coming put new ideas into Mr. Conner's 50-year-old head—for one thing, the building of a bigger home. It turned out to be the first brick house built in the "New Purchase" and, possibly, one of the first three in all Indiana. The brick for the sturdy two-foot-thick walls was burnt on the premises. Craftsmen were brought from the East to carve the delicate mouldings of the graceful mantels, cupboards and stairway, all of which were made of yellow poplar. The walls were tinted a delicate azure-blue to remove the hard, cold look of the white plaster. When completed, the house was a triumph of Southern Colonial architecture; more specifically, that of Maryland or Virginia. Which leads one to speculate whether an Indian trader operating in the wilderness of the West could have been in touch with the culture of his father's birthplace. A shrewder guess is that, maybe: Elizabeth dictated the taste displayed in the magnificent mansion.

Waste of Sympathy

Be that as it may, this was the 112-year-old house that Eli Lilly acquired when he bought his Hamilton county farm in 1935. It was in such a sorry state of repair at the time that many people pitied Mr. Lilly. It was a waste of sympathy. Mr. and Mrs. Eli Lilly knew all along that they were going to recapture the dignity and distinction of the original Conner home. I drag Mrs. Lilly into today's piece because it was she who refitted the interior with furnishings of the period and memorabilia of the original owners. Her scrupulous insistence on having everything just right and authentic accounts for the fact that you won't find a piece of mahogany in any of the rooms—for the reason that walnut was the fashion of that daya. As for Mr. Lilly, he restored the outside of the house including the building of a beautiful two-story porch.

I mention the porch for two reasons: (1) because of an anachronism and (2) because of the comforting discovery that purists like the Lillys have whims like everybody else. As near as I can learn, Mr. Lilly added a porch to a house which originally didn't have a porch because that side of the house commanded a magnificent view of the rich bottomlands of White river; and without a porch there wasn't any way of enjoying it — except, maybe, through a window.

Mr. Lilly felt fully justified in perpetrating an anachronism when he ran across a lecture delivered in 1853 by Nathaniel Bolton, state librarian, husband of the author of "Paddle Your Own Canoe," and editor of the first Indianapolis newspaper (The Gazette). In the course of that lecture, Mr. Bolton said that way back in 1823 he "spent many delightful evenings at Conner's Mansion." Enraptured by the view before him, he said: "I never beheld a more delightful scene than when I looked from a second story window of Mr. Conner's dwelling on a field of 300 acres of waving corn, some two feet high, with 15 or 20 merry ploughmen scattered over it at work. It was doubly interesting coming, as I did, out of nature's forest, only broken by the occasional cabins and small patches of cleared land of the early settlers."

Mr. Lilly's anachronistic porch comes in mighty handy in the spring. On those days he sits on a sheltered veranda of his own design and watches the "merry ploughmen" at work. As far as I know, Mr. Lilly has spent only one night in the Conner house in all the time he's owned it—probably because it hasn't got a bathroom. Mr. Lilly's conscientious regard for historical values didn't permit him to perpetrate more than one anachronism.

(Concluded Tomorrow)

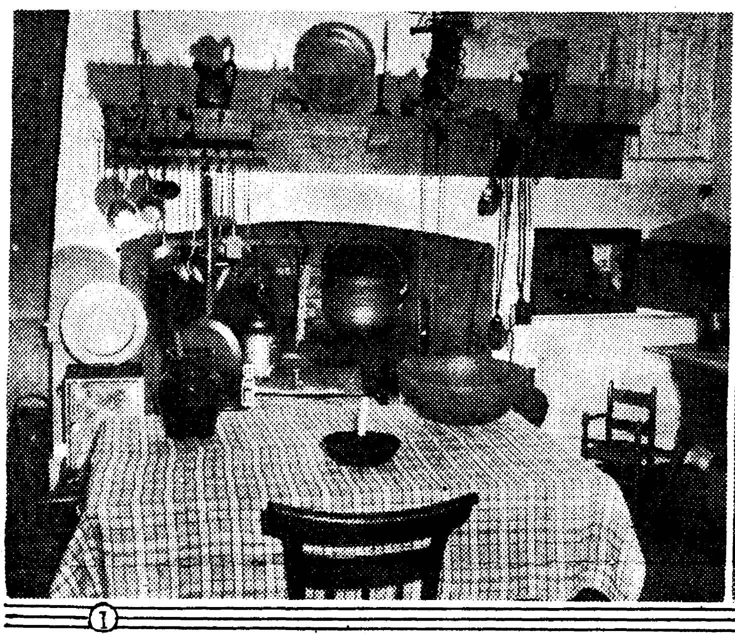
The Indianapolis Times

SECOND SECTION FRIDAY, JANUARY 28, 1944 PAGE 17

Our Town

"Period Piece"

By ANTON SCHERRER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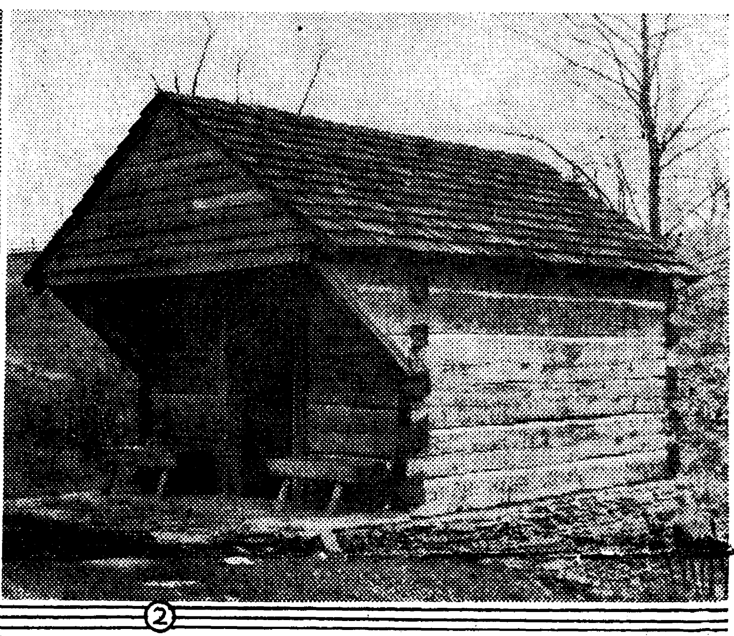
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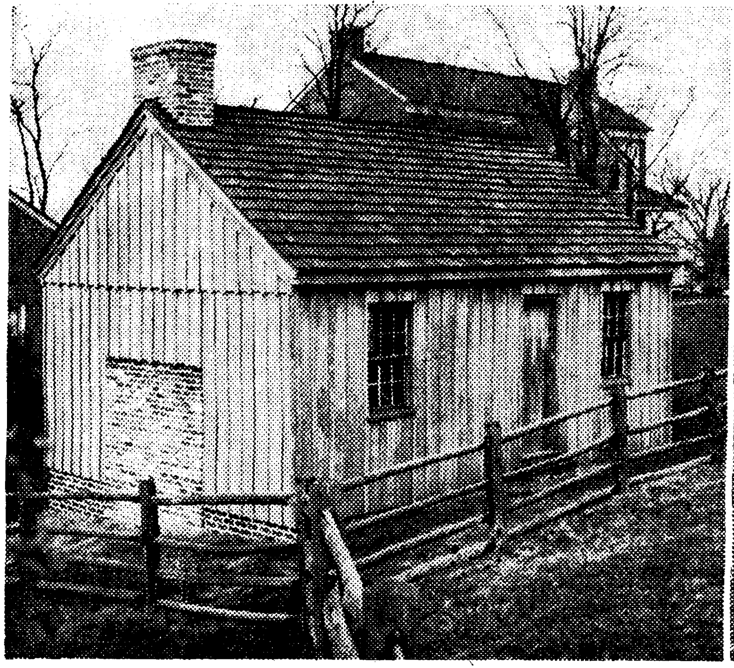
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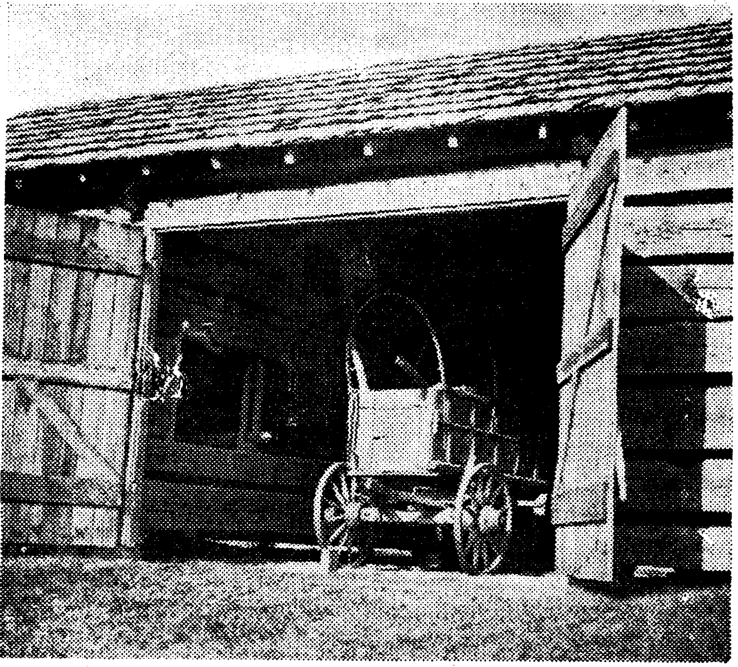
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Photos by Victor Peterson.

1. The interior of Mrs. Conner's kitchen, a restoration by Mrs. Eli Lilly. The wall opening at the right reveals a glimpse of the "beehive" oven from whence came "the choice rolls, warm breads and puddings" described by the bewildered Baynard R. Hall.

2. The exterior of the restored milk house from which came Mrs. Conner's "delicious butter rising in unctuous pyramids fretted from base to apex into a kind of butyrial shellwork."

3. Exterior of William Conner's restored loomhouse. The building to the rear at the right is the "mansion." The gable of the house at the left belongs to the museum, a building designed to house the Conner memorabilia gathered by Mr. Lilly. It includes photostat copies of the treaties William Conner signed as Indian interpreter.

4. William Conner's barn, revealing the kind of wagon used in and around "The Conner Prairie Farm" when it was going good in 1830. This wagon was exhibited at the 1898 Chicago World fair.

NUMBER FOUR

William Conner was somewhere around 50 years old in 1823, the year he built the big beautiful brick house for his second wife, the 21-year-old aristocratic Elizabeth Chapman. Situated as it was in the wilderness near Noblesville (on what is now Eli Lilly's farm), the house could be reached from Indianapolis only by way of an Indian trail (or, maybe White river). Even so, it was the center of life in the "new country." Distinguished visitors from everywhere dropped in on the Conners and included in the legendary list were James Fenimore Cooper, Charles C. Trowbridge and Baynard R. Hall.

A tradition handed down in the Conner family has it that Cooper visited William Conner "sometime after 1823" to secure first-hand material concerning the Delaware Indians for his "Leather Stocking Series," the first volume of which — "The Pioneers" — had already been written.

No documentary evidence exists that Cooper ever visited Indiana. On the other hand, there is circumstantial evidence, and as Henry Thoreau once observed: "Some circumstantial evidence is very strong, as when one finds a trout in the milk." For one thing, Cooper's virtuous and courageous Indians were, as a rule, Delawares and presented in a way to have the readers believe that the author considered the Delawares the best of all the Indian tribes, an opinion also shared by William Conner. Moreover, "The Last of the Mohicans," the second volume of the "Leather Stocking Series" and a book loaded with Conner's brand of good Indians, was published in 1826. What's more, William Conner's library contained a number of James Fenimore Cooper's novels with the author's name inscribed on the fly-leaf. (And just in case you're interested, his library also included a copy of "Scottish Chiefs" and the complete works of Robert Burns and William Shakespeare.)

Proved Their Status

Less apocryphal were the visits of Charles C. Trowbridge and Baynard R. Hall. Both left written accounts. Trowbridge, a citizen of Michigan, came in December, 1823, as an emissary from Governor Cass to study and record the language and customs of the Delaware Indians. He spent three months in the brand-new brick house and left word that he found William Conner "an intelligent gentleman and an excellent interpreter.

The reason for Mr. Trowbridge's visit was a fiendish desire on the part of Governor Cass to show up Peter du Ponceau. He was a Philadelphia French-American lawyer and scholar who had been excited sometime around 1816 by a grammar of the Delaware Indians which had been prepared way back in 1776 by the Rev. David Zeisberger, the noble Moravian missionary and mentor of the four Conner boys. Du Ponceau's research interested the philologists to such a degree that it started an acrimonious debate revolving around the question of whether or not the Delaware language had inflections, suffixes and prefixes.

When Cass got wind of du Ponceau's conclusion that the Delawares had a grammar language, he looked upon it as just that much more rubbish and romancing about the Indians. In the hope of putting a stop to it, he applied to Secretary of War Calhoun for permission to appoint a suitable person to pursue the inquiry, with the result that Trowbridge was directed to the "residence of William Conner on White river in Indiana." After his three month's stay with Conner, Trowbridge reported that "the investigations revealed a marvelous system of regular verbal inflection and prepositional arrangement." I thought you ought to know.

Report Was 'Cozy'

Baynard R. Hall's report compared with that of Trowbridge's was cozy. Hall was an itinerant teacher and preacher who came to Indiana from the East sometime around 1820. In 1823 he was elected president of Indiana Seminary, now Indiana university. After a stay of more than seven years in Indiana, he returned East and in 1843 wrote an account of his experiences and observations under the pen name of "Robert Carleton." According to this account Hall and William Conner were intimate friends.

Included in Mr. Hall's story was a description of a supper with the William Conners—of the elegrant appointments particularly the silver—the "superbly made tea and coffee; choice rolls; delicious butter rising in unctuous pyramids, fretted from base to apex into a kind of butyrial shellwork; this resting on silver and to be cut with silver": steaks done on gridirons; warm breads and puddings; cakes and fruits—all were served from silver plates, mats and urns and on cloth as white as snow." The Hall rhapsody ends with the question: "Was ever such a contrast as between the untutored world around and the array and splendour and richness of our sumptuous banquet?"

Mr. Hall's question, propounded in 1843, was answered 94 years later—as a matter of fact in 1937 when the Indiana Historical Society published "Sons of the Wilderness," the extraordinary account of the Conner boys written by our own Charles N. Thompson. It's the book from which, without any shame whatever, I have cribbed everything I know. "The Conners," says Mr. Thompson, "had opportunities in their visits to eastern cities to procure not only personal and household articles that were necessary to their comfort but others which were, in their surroundings, really luxurious. They had the means and indulged their tastes, but the lavish display described by Hall was unlike them. He probably was again misled by the imperfect memory or by the possession of a too vivid imagination."

Lived In Style

Mr. Hall's rhapsody together with the sober opinion expressed by Mr. Thompson are lugged into today's piece for no other reason than to call attention (once more) to Mrs. Lilly's remarkable work in restoring the interiors of the William Conner "mansion"—this time with special reference to the way she has fixed up Mrs. Conner's kitchen and cupboards. They reveal the "splendor and richness "mentioned by Mr. Hall and the Conners' predilection for "taste" implied by Mr. Thompson's paragraph. No matter how you look at it—whether with Mr. Hall's or Mr. Thompson's eyes—it remains a fact that the Conners lived in style.

William and Elizabeth Conner lived in the big beautiful brick house from 1823 to 1837. In the course of those 14 years they did a lot of other things besides entertain distinguished visitors. For example, William Conner helped to initiate and establish Hamilton county. He was its first treasurer. The first circuit court was held in the Conner home. What's more, it continued to have its sessions there until a courthouse could be built. With the help of Josiah F. Polk, a young lawyer who had come out of the East in search of his fortune, William Conner planned and laid out the town of Noblesville.

In 1824, William Conner was on the commission to locate the county seat of Allen county and served with two others to lay out a state road between Ft. Wayne and Indianapolis. What time was left that year, he spent campaigning for Henry Clay against Andrew Jackson, John Quincy Adams and William H. Crawford, all of whom wanted to be President. When the Republican party was born, Conner embraced it as an answer to his prayers. He was also among the first—maybe, the very first—to introduce Masonry into this part of Indiana. He was the senior warden of Hamilton lodge No. 32. Two years later, he spent a good deal of his time in Indianapolis administering the estate of his pioneer brother, John, who died in 1826. William continued his brother's Indianapolis store—that of Conner & Harrison—pursuant to a wish expressed in John Conner's will. In 1830, William helped to start the Indiana Historical society of which Eli Lilly in president today.

In 1829-32 and again in 1836-37 William Conner served as state representative. In the legislature he concerned himself mostly with problems of public education and transportation (first in the building of canals and later in the promotion of railroads). Almost unbelievable is the fact that Conner was interested in promoting a real-for-sure railroad to Indianapolis as early as 1834, less than 14 years after the Fall creek basin was picked as the site upon which to set Indianapolis. The site was picked, you may remember, because of its proximity to water and the possibility of having a harbor for river boats.

When Black Hawk's activities raised hell in 1832, Conner as chief scout led 300 men under Col. A. W. Russell from Indianapolis to Ft. Dearborn only to return in three weeks without having seen an Indian. They came back because the war was over. Which reminds me that nowhere in this series have I mentioned William Conner's participation in the War of 1812. Well, he was in that too—this time with better results.

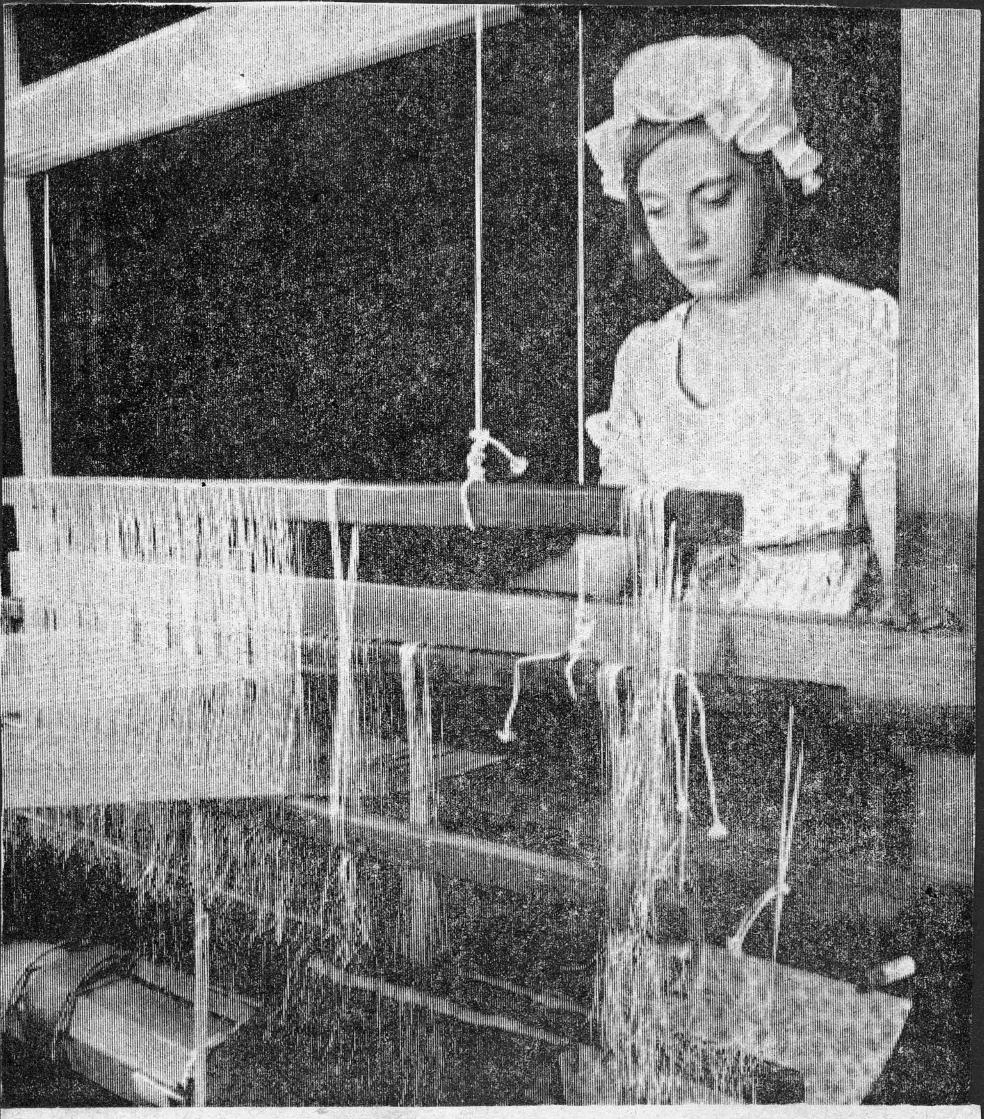
Sells Household Goods

On March 1, 1837, when he was 64 years old, William Conner held a sale of his household and farming goods and moved to Noblesville. His business and political interests demanded a town to operate in. Search me, I don't know why he didn't pick Indianapolis. Soon thereafter he sold his fur business, thus terminating his career as a fur trader. For the next 18 years, until the day of his death in 1855, he busied himself with real estate deals, civic enterprises and the behavior of his grandchildren.

When the Conners moved to Noblesville, Elizabeth took seven children with her. Three more were born in Noblesville. Counting the six by Mekinges, his Indian wife, William Conner was the father of 16 children. All sixteen gave a good account of themselves. Descendants of the half-breed children of William Conner have been engaged in the political, industrial and agricultural life in the Southwest since the first decade of their removal in 1820. As for Elizabeth's 10 (and their descendants), they turned out all right, too.

Quite apart from his long list of accomplishments, William Conner's career presents a disconcertingly good argument for babies.

THE END



PRETTY SPINNER—A lovely Earlham College student tends to a spinning and weaving demonstration in the loom house near the Conner mansion. The mansion is a pet project of the Eli Lilly foundation. Photo by Edward Matney.

Vigo County Public Library

Conner Family
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Conner Prairie Re-visited Trib.

Hoosier Heritage Haunts Pioneer Settlement

By HOWARD STEVENS
Tribune State Editor

NOBLESVILLE, Ind. (Special)—Hoosier history harbors a haunting air as visitors move through the Conner Prairie Pioneer Settlement and Museum in this north central Indiana community.

Snuggled close to SR 37 A, the settlement is four miles south of here and an easy 30-minute drive from downtown Indianapolis. Colorful costumed guides conduct tours of the settlement and museum — landmarks of Indiana's foremost pioneer settlers.

Conner Prairie Settlement with its white board fences is a complex of buildings both original and restored. Visitors enter through a large modern barn which houses the Museum, a snack bar, and rest room facilities. In the Museum is found a 24-foot dugout canoe which was excavated near the settlement in 1964.

Carved from a Tulip tree, the canoe was part of the foundation for a dam which was constructed 150 years ago. Also housed in the Museum are exhibits of pioneer farming implements and a chronology of the life of William Conner after whom the Settlement was named.

As the visitor leaves the modern 20th Century barn, he steps back in time to the early 1800's as represented by the restored log buildings which portray the early years of the Conner Settlement. The visitor's trail leads past a storage building to the double log Pioneer Barn with its covered wagon and other implements of the period.

The adjoining log cabin has been restored to the type of dwelling in which Conner and his Indian wife might have lived. Near it is a Trading Post typical of those which carried on a brisk trade in fur and household goods during this frontier period.

A footpath circles the bluff of a hill giving the visitor a majestic view of the brick Conner Homestead. The path emerges at the log Still House where corn grown on the 200-acre horseshoe prairie was once distilled into whiskey. Cool water, carried by a wooden flume from a spring above, condensed the distilled spirits. Midway up the hill is the restored Spring House with cold water flowing through troughs to cool perishable foods.

Climbing the hill, the visitor passes the heating plant housed in a separate brick building for safety. Beside it is a restored Loom House where the guide demonstrates spinning and weaving.

The final building encountered is the William Conner Home, built in 1823, which was the first brick building in the territory known as the New Purchase—roughly what is now the central third of Indiana. The present building is the original structure and has been restored as it would have appeared at the time it was occupied by William Conner and his second wife.

A visit to Conner Prairie Pioneer Settlement is a pleasant afternoon for the whole family. A picnic area is available and there is ample parking. Conner Prairie is open to the public Saturday and Sunday afternoons 1-5 p.m. during May and beginning June 10 will be open 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays, and from 1 to 5 p.m. on Sundays, until Labor Day.

Special events planned this year are "Quilt Days," June 28-29, and demonstrations on spinning and dying wool, rug braiding and chair caning July 4.

INDIANA ROOM
PAMPHLET FILE

It Might Have Been Our State Capital

The Saga of Conner Prairie Farm

By Herbert R. Hill
Editor of Outdoor Indiana

The frontier trading post settlement in Hamilton County which might have been the capital of Indiana has now become a historical museum. Known as Conner Prairie Farm, it is increasingly attracting Hoosier visitors and tourists from all over the world who have learned at least something of its picturesque charm, and its historical and romantic background.

In the 168 years since it was founded, the Conner trading post and the handsome brick mansion which supplanted it in 1823 have been the scenes of some of the most unusual events in pioneer Indiana.

A Shawnee Indian raid into the Lehigh Valley of Eastern Pennsylvania during the *French and Indian War* (1754-1759) led to the capture of six-year-old Margaret Boyer. Exploring in Eastern Ohio in 1767, a young Ulsterman named Richard Conner found the young captive and paid the Shawnee $200 for her release. He pledged that he would marry her. But he also was compelled to promise that their first-born son would be surrendered to the Shawnee for adoption. Both promises were duly kept.

After conducting a sort of frontier inn among the Shawnee, the Conners spent the Winter of 1774 at Fort Pitt (Pittsburgh), at that time a small Pennsylvania settlement of 30 houses. They immediately returned to the Tuscarawas and Upper Muskingum Valley in Ohio to help found Moravian missions for conversion of Delaware Indians to Christianity.

Their son, James Conner, was restored to them by the Shawnee in 1776 for $40 ransom. John was born at Schoenbrunn in Ohio in 1775, and then William was born, probably in 1777 or before.

The First Brick Mansion in Pioneer Central Indiana Was Built by William Conner at His Prairie Farm Above White River in 1823.

By 1750 the Ohio Valley and the country around the Great Lakes had become the refuge of many Indian tribes. They had been pushed Westward across the Alleghenies by the coastal Colonies. The Delaware and Shawnee (Algonquians) sought new lands in the open country. After being driven from the Susquehanna, the Wyandots (Iroquoian) occupied the Western end of Lake Erie.

The British were determined, after losing the *American Revolution,* to erect a stockade of terror and harrassment which would confine the American Colonies to the Atlantic Seaboard. They hired Indian mercenaries and renegades to conduct this murderous campaign, and no frontier cabin or settlement was safe.

The Conner family was captured at Salem, Ohio, in 1781 along with 400 Moravian - converted Indians. They were taken on a brutal march to Detroit. Accused of giving aid to the Americans, they were tried by a British Military court, which decided to divide them to remove the missionaries' influence.

The Indians were permitted to filter back into Ohio. The Conner family was transported 20 miles North of Detroit on the Clinton River, near the present community of Mt. Clemens.

The four Conner sons and their sister grew up in Michigan among the Chippewa. Richard Conner operated a wilderness farm. They learned the three Delaware dialects—Munsee, Unami, and Unalachtigo—and also Chippewa, Shawnee and Wyandot. They were accepted by numerous tribes as virtual Indians, and were formally adopted by the Shawnee.

In 1796 John and William Conner ventured into the wild Saginaw region as fur traders. They were quickly successful. But there were more Indians—and therefore more furs—farther South.

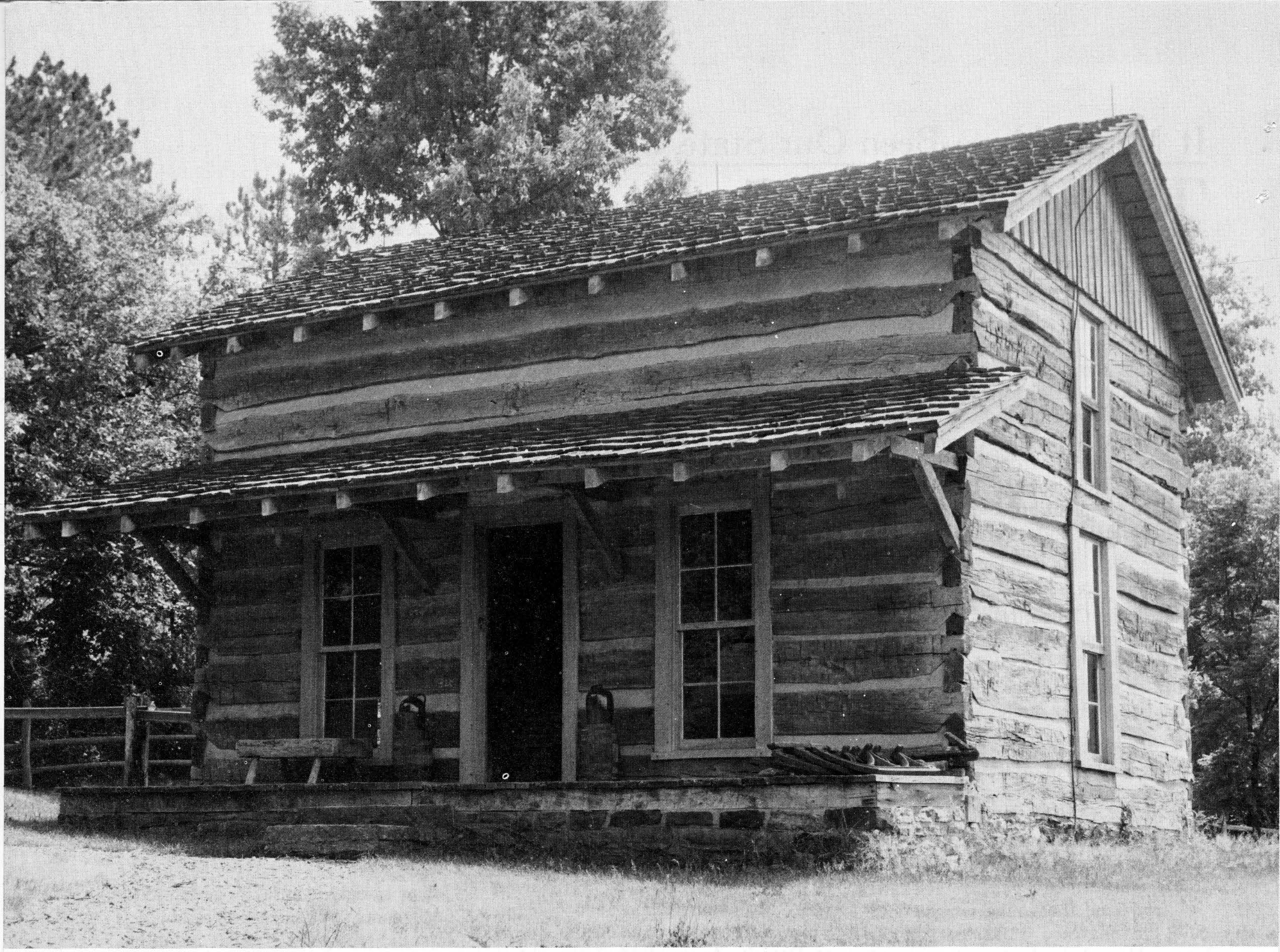
In 1800 William went with brother John into the newly created Indiana Territory. On a fur-trading mission in 1801 William met and married Mekinges, daughter of the Delaware chief William Anderson, who lived near the present Madison County seat of Anderson.

Instructions to young William Henry Harrison as the new Territorial Governor were to roll back all Indians, to exterminate the hostile Indians, and to make the expanding frontier safe for settlement.

Harrison was to use persuasion instead of force whenever possible. The Federal government hoped that the *Treaty of Greenville*, negotiated in 1795 after Wayne's victory at Fallen Timbers, would be recognized by all Indians as the better course.

Fur trading eventually gave way to settlements. But since fur trading was essential to good Indian relations, Harrison wanted the fur trade in American hands instead of British. When William Conner asked for a trader's license Harrison promptly granted it. Thus he was enabled free passage from Indian-held lands to the Territorial communities. Harrison already knew John Conner and had used him to sound out Tecumseh, who had become leader of the Miami Confederacy after Pontiac and Little Turtle. Now Harrison could utilize also the special position which William Conner would occupy as Chief Anderson's son-in-law.

Harrison between 1800 and 1809 negotiated a series of treaties with various tribes, which presumed to transfer legal title to most of Indiana. Younger and more belligerent Indians objected to this loss of millions of acres. They were particularly aroused by the *Treaty of Fort Wayne* in 1809, charging a "sellout" by their chiefs.



An Open Wooden Flume Carries Water Down from the Springhouse (at Left) to the Pioneer Distillery (Above) Where Exportable Spirits Were Manufactured in Quantity.

The British continued to incite the Indians to frontier terrorism. Two Shawnee—Tecumseh and his half-brother, The Prophet—became convinced that war was inevitable. Tecumseh so informed Harrison when he made a special trip to Vincennes for a blunt showdown.

In all this the two Conner brothers played an almost unique role. William now referred to himself as a Delaware. They both spoke the Indian languages and could look like Indians and think like Indians. Yet they were devout Moravians and ardent Masons and regarded themselves as outposts of American civilization.

After a trip to Washington, D. C., the year before, when he held important conversations with top government leaders, John Conner in 1803 established a log store at Cedar Grove, South of the present city of Brookville. Like William, he too had an Indian wife and halfbreed children. John also built a log house, gristmills and sawmill in Franklin County.

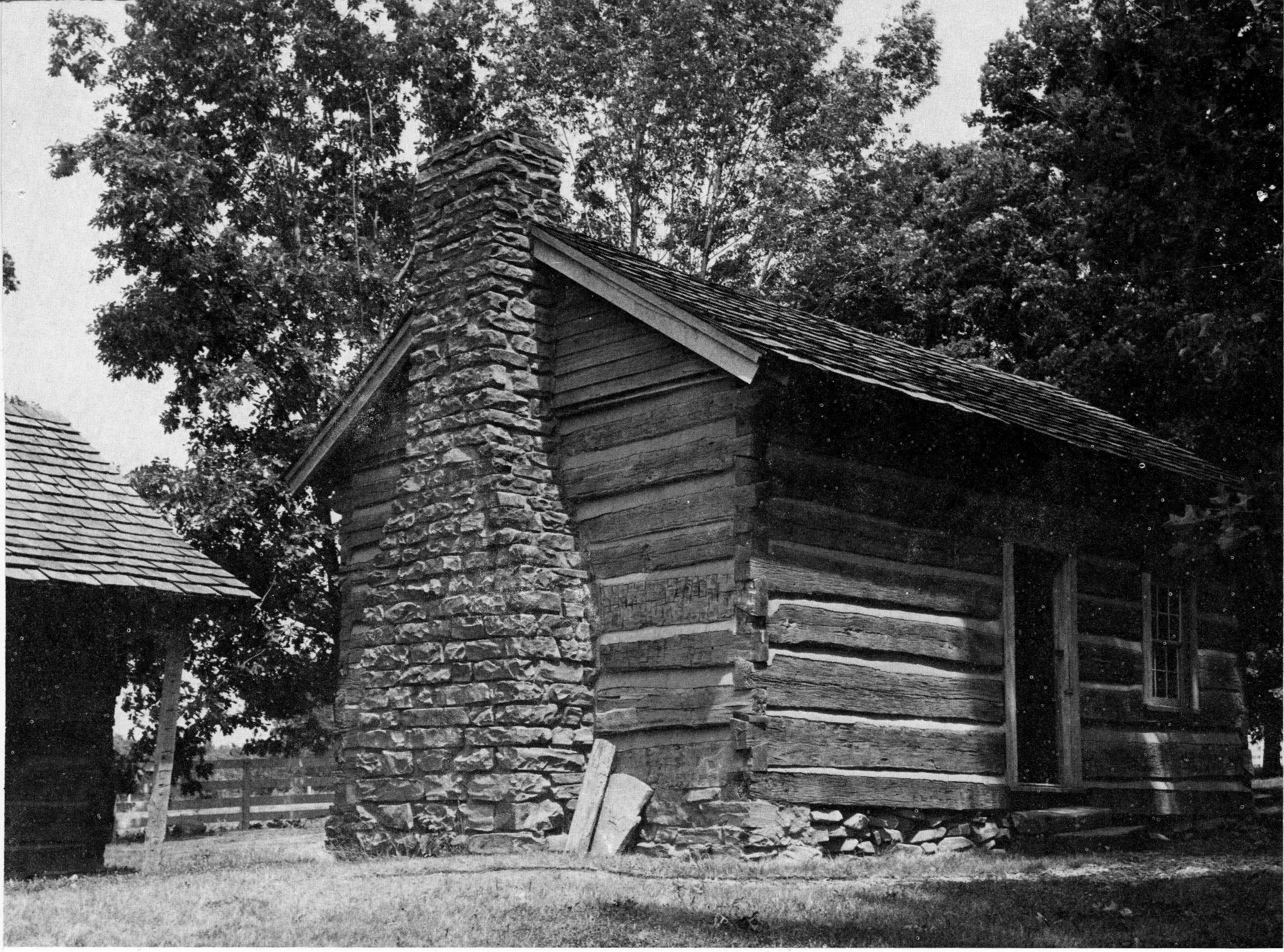
William Conner built a two-room cabin and trading post in 1802 on the land given to him by Chief Anderson. It was four miles South of present-day Noblesville between the Indian villages of Upper Delaware Town and Lower Delaware Town, on the East bank of White River where periodic high waters had formed a prairie amid the heavy wilderness forests.

The cabin was near the river and ⅜ of a mile North of the brick mansion which William built in 1823. Princess Mekinges knew no other home while she was Mrs. Conner. However, a small village developed around the Conner cabin.

A route know as *The Conner Trail* was established from William's post to John's store on Cedar Creek. Ponies carried furs via the present communities of Anderson, New Castle, Connersville and Brookville, and then they would be sent by water from Cedar Creek to Cincinnati and New Orleans. The return cargo was goods from John's store to be traded by brother William.

Thus the Conner brothers became principal *factors* in the Delaware villages along the upper White River (Wahaherri).

Another branch of *The Conner Trail* led from William's post to Fort Wayne and Detroit. As British pressure mounted it declined. But the



This Is a Restoration of William Conner's Popular Trading Post, the Keystone of His Many Business Activities.

route Southeastward increasingly prospered.

The *Treaty of Grouseland* in 1805 opened up the *Twelve Mile Purchase.* John moved to the present site of Connersville in 1808, being one of the first five settlers in the neighborhood. He started a second store there to provide necessities for Westbound pioneers.

By 1815 Franklin County, with 7,370 population, was second in size only to Knox among Hoosier counties. John Conner owned the buildings and 320 acres at Cedar Grove, 120 acres at Laurel on the West fork of the Whitewater (where the famous Wetzel Trace started) and the Connersville cabin, store and blockhouse.

After the *War of 1812* William also expanded. He sent as far away as New Orleans the corn whisky made in his two-story log stillhouse. It was far easier to transport whisky than bulky corn, and throughout pioneer Indiana whisky was an important export.

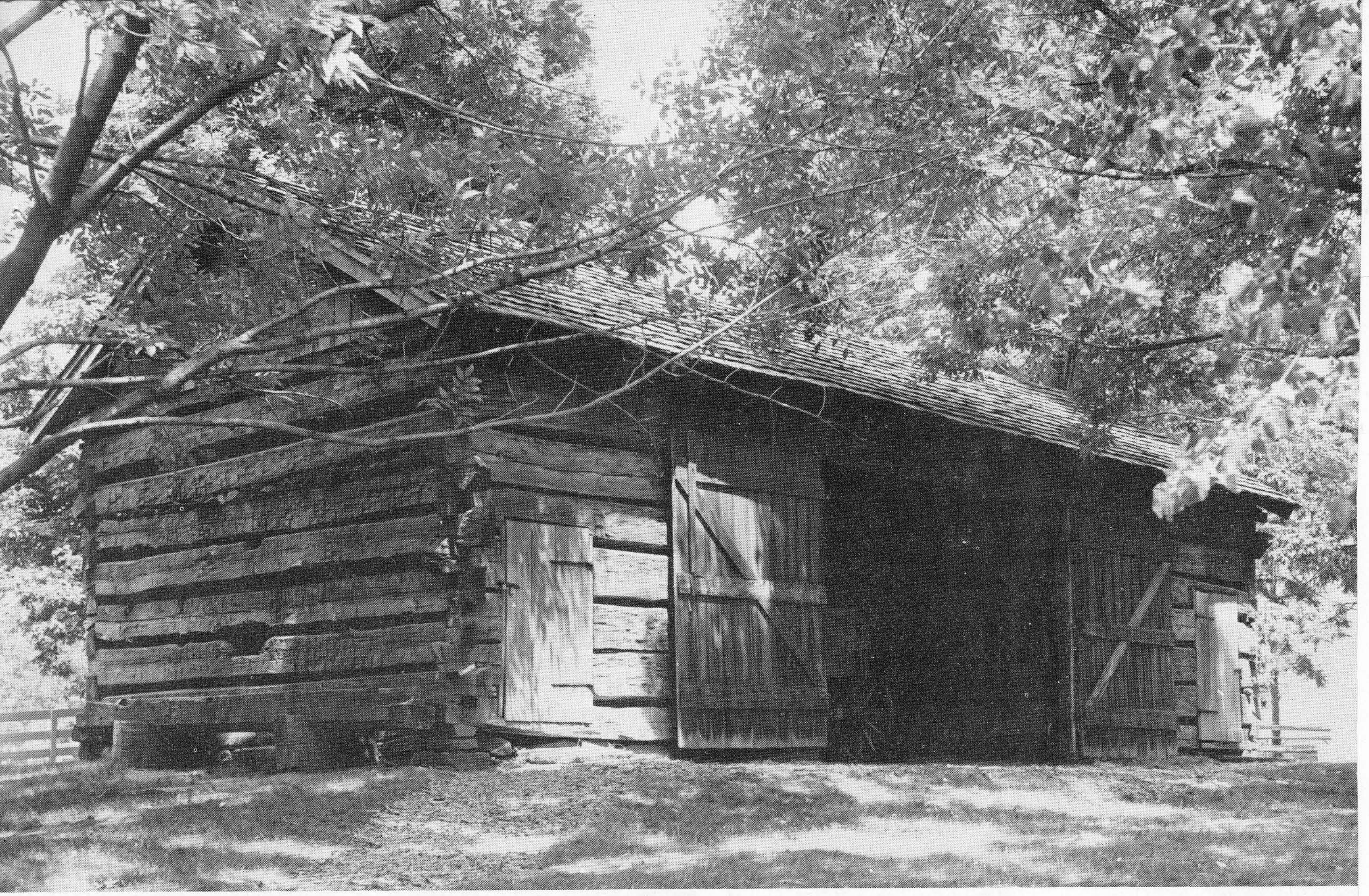
William Conner was known by the Indians as the most honest of all the traders. This was in contrast to the many cheats and swindlers who robbed the Indians, abused their women, and drove them off their land.

A schedule of prices paid by William Conner includes these items: raccoon 37½c to 40c; wildcat, fisher (marten) and fox 50c to 67c; mink 50c; deer or buckskin $1; bear or otter $4 to $5. Conner and his helpers dressed, stretched, dried, and bundled the furs, and then packed them off on ponies on *The Conner Trail.*

William Conner continued in the fur business from 1802 until 1823, when the supplying of settler's wants became more profitable.

The pioneer advance affected everybody. *The Conner brothers gradually changed from sons of the wilderness to fathers of the new State of Indiana.* Their advice and friendship were eagerly sought. They acted as interpreters when another treaty was negotiated at Greenville (Ohio) in 1814, when the four treaties resulting in *The New Purchase* were executed at St. Mary's (Ohio) in 1818, and when the two *Treaties of Mississinewa* were negotiated in 1826.

William Conner helped Chief Anderson persuade 400 Delaware braves to reject Tecumseh's pleas that they



The Frontier Log Barn Houses a Tool Room and Covered Wagon. The Farm's New Museum Has a More Extensive Exhibit.

join his preparations for the *War of 1812*. He also helped to open up the vital military road from St. Mary's to Fort Defiance.

John Conner was Harrison's scout at the *Battle of Tippecanoe* (1811), and William Conner was Colonel John Campbell's chief scout at the *Battle of Mississinewa* (1812), near the present city of Marion.

William Conner also was with Harrison at the siege of *Fort Meigs* in 1813. He helped to identify the body of Tecumseh when Harrison broke the power of the Northwest Territory Indians at the *Battle of the Thames* in Ontario on October 15, 1813.

These operations on land by Harrison and Johnson's Kentuckians, and Admiral Perry's marine victories on Lake Erie, did much to secure the West for the new Nation.

The Conner brothers were at Greenville as interpreters when the United States made its major peace with the Indians on July 22, 1814. *The War of 1812* was formally concluded at the *Treaty of Ghent* on December 24, 1814.

When John Conner's Indian wife died, he married Lavina Winship (he was 38 and she was 25) on March 13, 1813. He built a new two-room cabin for her at Connersville, 60 miles up the Whitewater Trail from Cincinnati. When William visited John he was astonished at the different atmosphere when the housewife was not a squaw.

Franklin was one of the seven original Indiana counties, and with Wayne and Dearborn counties it formed the *Whitewater Coalition* that helped Jonathan Jennings win as the State of Indiana's first Governor.

Just as the Conner brothers were able to retain the friendship of both the Indians and the white settlers, so they were friendly with both Jennings and Harrison, who were arch political rivals.

John Conner was elected from Franklin County as one of the 10-man Indiana State Senate when it first convened in 1817. When he succeeded in getting Fayette County formed from Franklin in 1818, he was appointed Fayette's first sheriff. And the new county seat selected for Fayette was Connersville, the town founded by far-sighted John!

The Delaware had agreed by treaty in 1818 to sell all their lands to the State of Indiana. This brought a real crisis at William Conner's trading post. After much discussion Mekinges and her six Conner children decided to accompany their fellow tribesmen Westward to Missouri.

William Conner had been unable to get clear title from the American government to his considerable Hamilton County holdings. What could he give her? Chief Anderson had been his benefactor. Now Mekinges was leaving.

Finally it was agreed that he buy

60 ponies for his departing Indian wife, and she in turn promised to send their half-breed children back to visit him at intervals.

The Delaware started their pitiful departure in September, 1820. It was an exodus of which many later Hoosiers were not too proud.

Turning his back at least part way on the past, William Conner on November 30, 1820, married 17-year-old Elizabeth Chapman. She was 30 years his junior.

It was a civil ceremony, and one of the first marriages in the *New Purchase*. There was a big wedding feast, and not only the settlers but also Indians attended and remained at the Conner homestead several days.

The new white wife had been born in New York, and then moved with her family to Connersville. In 1819 several families moved on to a prairie site between the Conner cabin and what is now Noblesville, travelling on horseback and by oxcart. William Conner immediately befriended the newcomers, and it was natural that he became acquainted with the Chapman girl.

In 1823 William Conner built a handsome brick house on spacious Horseshoe Prairie for his young bride. It was two stories high, the first such mansion constructed in the *New Purchase.*

In due time 10 children were born to William and Elizabeth. He was the largest land-owner in the *New Purchase* and also served for a while as Indian Commissioner for the Federal Government.

The Indiana Legislature appointed a 10-man commission on January 11, 1820, to proceed to the geographical center of the new State and establish a new State Capital. On the 10th day thereafter they arrived on horseback from Corydon at William Conner's cabin. John Conner was one of the 10 Commissioners. So was Governor Jennings.

Why was the Conner brothers' influence unable to maneuver selection of William Conner's settlement—by that time including a post office among its several buildings—as the new State Capital site? The answer is that *Conner did not have clear legal title to the vast holdings which he had obtained from the Indians.*

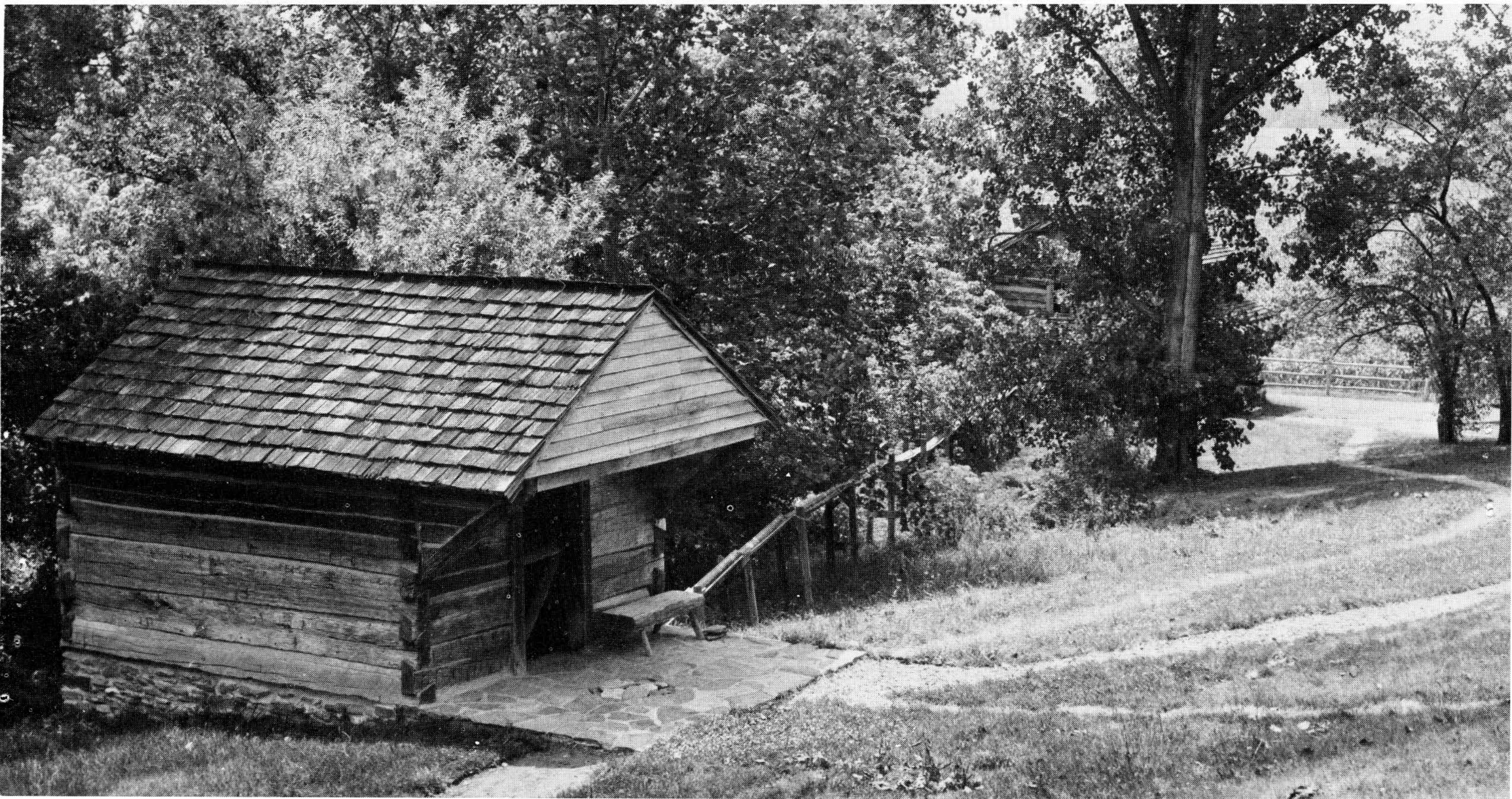
Although William Conner did receive American patents to 648 acres in 1823, he finally obtained unquestioned title to all his properties just three months before his death in 1855.

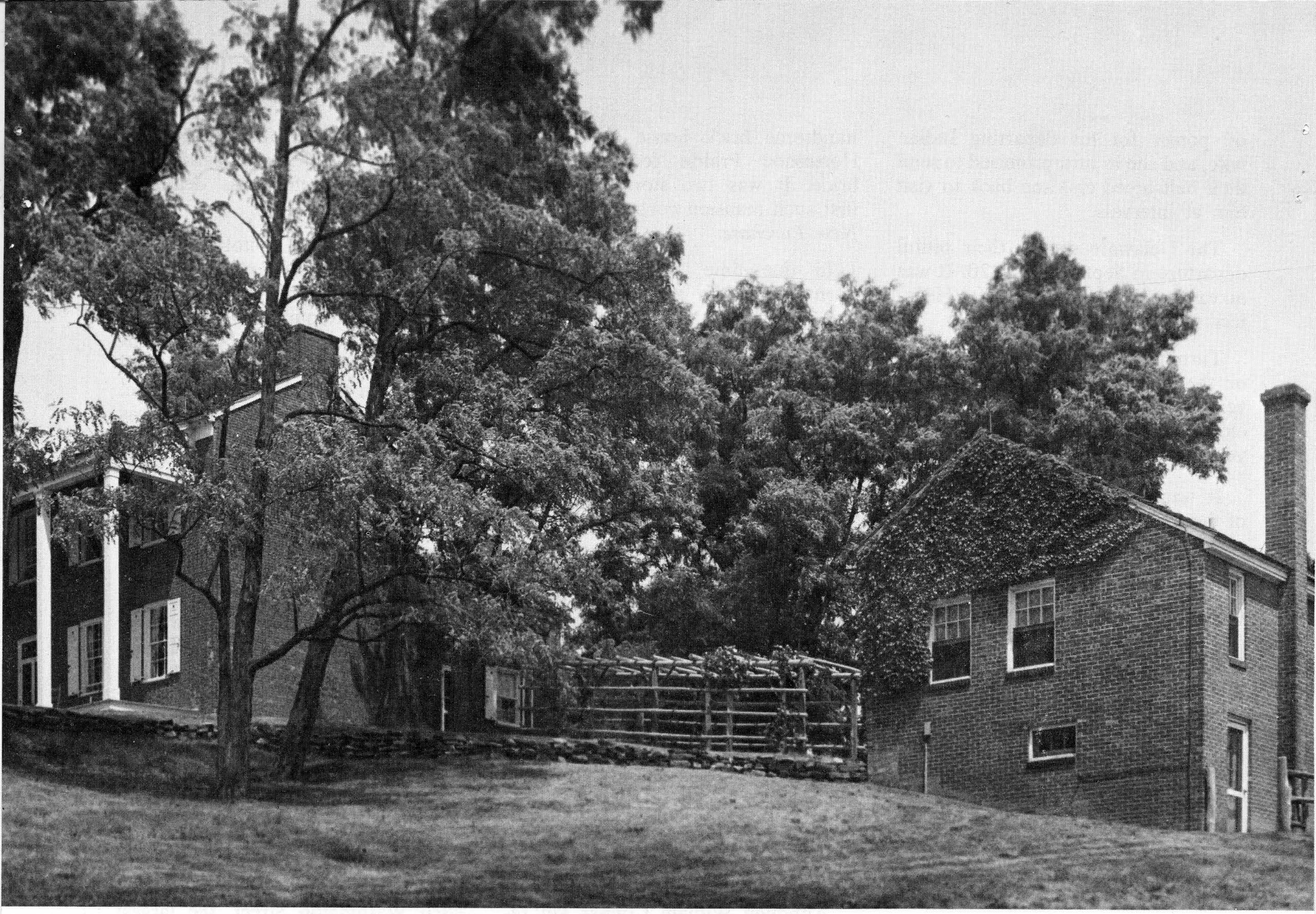
The first State Capitol—at Corydon—is now preserved as a State Memorial by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources. It was used from 1816 to 1825, when the government was moved to Indianapolis, 20 miles South of Conner Prairie Farm. The first Indianapolis Statehouse was completed in 1835. The present Statehouse was begun in 1878 and completed in 1888.

John Conner closed his Connersville store and moved to Indianapolis in June, 1823. For the third time he was a frontier merchant in a completely new community. He was elected to the Indiana House of Representatives and sat in its first Indianapolis session in 1825. Twice he had made a "legislative first," for he had been a member of the first Indiana State Senate in Corydon in 1817.

After a trip East for wares in the Winter of 1826 he died unexpectedly in Indianapolis. They gave him a huge funeral procession down stump-filled Washington Street, the largest such event up to that time.

Here Is the Springhouse, Which Was Used for Butter-making, with the Flume, Leading to the Right Toward the Distillery.





An Old Grape Arbor Leads from the Modern Heating Plant (Right) to the Kitchen Door of the Conner Manson. The Pillared West Front of the House Looks Down on the Rich Prairie and Its River.

William Conner also served in the Indiana House of Representatives as a Henry Clay Whig, from 1829 to 1832, and again in 1836 and 1837. He helped to found both Noblesville (1823) and Alexandria (1836).

The first Hamilton Circuit Court was convened at his red brick mansion. He helped build the turnpike between Indianapolis and Fort Wayne, and was a principal promoter of the Lawrenceburg & Indianapolis Railway and the Peru & Indianapolis Railway.

When the Sauk (Sac) Chief Black Hawk seemed to be threatening new frontier terror in 1832, William Conner led 300 militiamen under Colonel A. W. Russell from Marion, Johnson and Hendricks Counties to Fort Dearborn (Chicago). The flareup ended quickly and they saw no action.

In 1837 William Conner sold his mansion and his fur business and moved to Noblesville to administer the 3,000 acres he owned in Marion, Hamilton, Cass and Wabash Counties. He spent his final years in Indianapolis, being particularly interested in libraries, public education, the Masonic Fraternity and the Indiana Historical Society, of which he was a charter member in 1830.

In July, 1934, Eli Lilly, Indianapolis drug manufacturer and philanthropist, bought Conner Prairie Farm and for a time raised blooded livestock there. He authentically restored and furnished the brick mansion, the distillery, the loomhouse and the log springhouse. He also erected a pioneer barn, a log cabin similar to that built for Mekinges in 1802 and a reproduction of the trading post.

In 1964 Mr. Lilly gave Conner Prairie Farm to Earlham College. Conducted tours now show visitors through the new pioneer museum (the former stock barn), the mansion, and the dependent buildings. There also is a picnic ground overlooking the valley.

The most unusual item in the museum is a well-preserved Indian canoe, made out of a single log, which was dug up in the river bottoms nearby in 1964. If you are interested in such artifacts the canoe alone is worth the trip.

Conner Prairie Farm is four miles South of Noblesville on former State Highway 37, now known as 37A. It also can be reached by U. S. Highway 31, and State Highways 32, 37, 38 and 134.

Conner Prairie Farm is not far away from a new State Recreation Area which has been planned for North of Zionsville in Southeastern Boone County. It is historic and beautiful country and merits its ever-growing popularity.

Conner, William 6/29/66. T.H. Star.
Conner Prairie Museum.

Special Pioneer Events At Conner Prairie Museum

NOBLESVILLE, Ind. (Special)—Pioneer-style Fourth of July activities are scheduled Sunday and Monday, July 3-4 at the Conner Prairie Museum, located south of Noblesville.

The program will be complete with demonstrations of pioneer crafts along with games and contests popular when Indiana first became a state.

Demonstrating the steps from raw wool to finished cloth, using techniques and equipment from the 1820s will be by members of the Conner Prairie Pioneers. Various methods of spinning, weaving, and making natural dyes will be featured.

Candle making, chair caning and cooking over the open fireplace will round out the crafts.

In the game department, children will compete in the three-legged races and sack races popular in pioneer days. For women there will be potato peeling races and mother-daughter contests in unwinding skeins of wool.

For the menfolk, teams will be matched against each other in log sawing contests using old-style two-man crosscut saws.

The success of quilt day held last Sunday has prompted museum director Tony DeBlase to arrange another demonstration of quilting Sunday and Monday. A selection of the museum's 50 quilts will be on display.

Because of the turnout expected on the Fourth, the museum will open 1-5 p.m. Monday and will close Tuesday. The normal weekly schedule is 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday and 1-5 p.m. Sunday.

The museum and pioneer buildings, clustered around the brick home of William Conner, one of Indian's first settlers, were restored by Eli Lilly of Indianapolis and are operated by Earlham College. The settlement is located five miles south of Noblesville on Ind. 37-A.

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Sat. Spec. 3/25/67

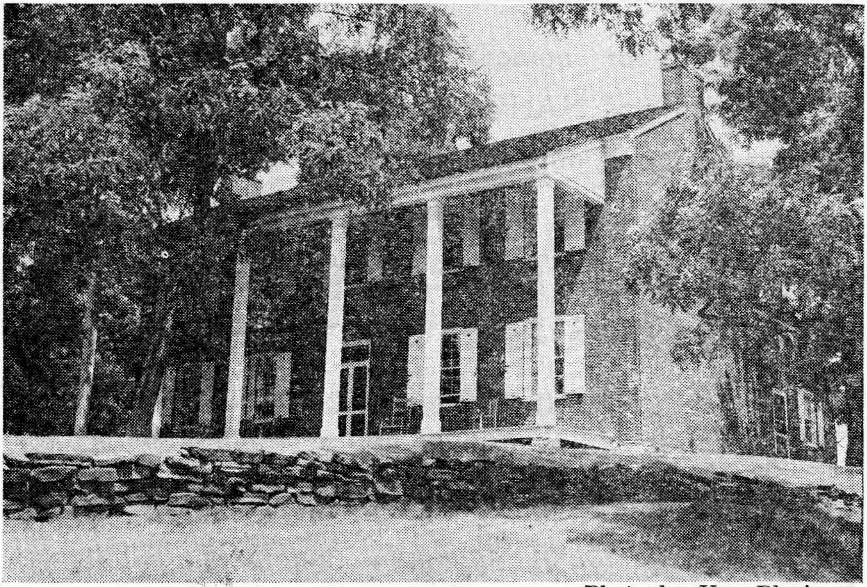

Photo by Van Blaricum

Mansion built in 1823.
This is a view of the west porch of the historic Conner

The frontier trading post settlement in Hamilton County which might have been the capital of Indiana has now become a historical museum. As such it is increasingly attracting Hoosier visitors and tourists from all over the world who have learned of its picturesque charm, and its historical and romantic background.

In the 165 years since it was founded, the Conner trading post and the handsome brick mansion which supplanted it have been the scenes of some of the most unusual events in pioneer Indiana.

A Shawnee Indian raid into the Lehigh Valley of eastern Pennsylvania during the French and Indian War led to the capture of 6-year-old Margaret Boyer. Exploring in eastern Ohio in 1767, a young Ulsterman named Richard Conner found the little white captive and paid the Shawnee $200 for her release. But he also was compelled to promise that their first-born son would be surrended to the Shawnee for adoption.

After conducting a sort of frontier inn among the Shawnee, the Conners spent the winter of 1774 at Fort Pitt (Pittsburgh), at that time a small Pennsylvania settlement of 30 houses. They immediately returned to the Tuscarawas and upper Muskingum Valley in Ohio to help found Moravian missions for conversion of Delaware Indians to Christianity.

Their son, James Conner, was restored to them in 1776 for $40 ransom. John was born in Ohio in 1775, and then William was born, probably in 1777.

By 1750 the Ohio Valley and the country around the Great Lakes had become the refuge of many Indian tribes. They had been pushed westward across the Alleghenies by the costal colonies. The Delaware and Shawnee sought new lands in the open country: After being driven from the Susquehanna, the Wyandots occupied the western end of Lake Erie.

The British were determined, after losing the American Revolution, to erect a stockade of terror and harrassment which would confine the American colonies to the Atlantic seaboard. They hired Indian mercenaries and renegades to conduct this campaign, and no froniter cabin or settlement was safe.

The Conner family was captured at Salem, Ohio, in 1781 along with 400 Moravian-converted Indians. They were taken on a brutal march to Detroit. Accused of giving aid to the Americans, they were tried by a British military court, which decided to divide them. The Indians were permitted to filter back into Ohio. The Conner family was transported north of Detroit on the Clinton River, near the present community of Mt. Clemens.

The four Conner sons and their sister grew up in Michigan among the Chippewa. They learned the three Delaware dialects and also Chippewa, Shawnee and Wyandot. They were accepted by numerous tribes as virtual Indians, and were formally adopted by the Shawnee.

In 1796 John and William Conner ventured into the wild Saginaw region as fur traders. They were quickly successful. But there more Indians and therefore more furs farther south.

In 1880 William went into Indiana. The next year he married Mekinges, daughter of the Delaware chief William Anderson, who lived near the present Madison County seat of Anderson.

Instructions to young William Henry Harrison as Govenor of the new Indiana Territory were to roll back all Indians, to exterminate hostile Indians, and to make the expanding frontier safe for settlement. He was to use persuasion instead of force whenever possible. The federal government hoped the Treaty of

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Greenville, negotiated n 1795 after Wayne's victory at Fallen Timber, would be recognized by all Indians as the better course.

Fur trading eventually gave way to settlements. But since fur trading was essential to good Indian relations, Harrison felt it was better to have more of the fur trade in American hands instead of British. When William Conner asked for a trader's license Harrison promptly granted it. He already knew John Conner and had used him to sound out Tecumseh, who had become leader of the Miami Confederacy after Pontiac and Little Turtle. Now Harrison could utilize also the special position which William Conner would occupy as Chief Anderson's son-in-law.

Harrison between 1800 and 1809 negotiated treaties with various tribes, which presumed to transfer legal title to most of Indiana. Younger and more belligerent Indians objected to this loss of millions of acres. They were particularly aroused by the Treaty of Ft. Wayne in 1809, charging a "sellout" by their chiefs.

The British continued to incite the Indians to frontier terrorism. Two Shawnee—Tecumseh and his half-brother, The Prophet—became convinced that war was inevitable. Tecumseh so informed Harrison when he made a special trip to Vincennes for a showdown.

In all this the two Conner brothers played an almost unique role. William now referred to himself as a Delaware. They both spoke the Indian languages and could look like Indians and think like Indians. Yet they were devout Moravians and ardent Masons and regarded themselves as outposts of white civilization.

After a trip to Washington, D. C., the year before, John Conner in 1803, established a log store at Cedar Grove, south of the present city of Brookville. Like William, he too had an Indian wife ~~and halfbreed children~~. John also built a log house, gristmill and sawmill in Franklin County.

A route known as The Conner Trail was established from William's post 4 miles south of the present Noblesville to John's store on Cedar Creek. Ponies carried furs via the present communities of Anderson and New Castle, and then they would be sent by water from Cedar Creek to Cincinnati and New Orleans. The return cargo was goods from John's store to be traded by brother William.

Another branch of The Conner Trail led from Williams post to Ft. Wayne and Detroit. As British pressure mounted it declined.

The Treaty of Grouseland in 1805 opened up the Twelve Mile Purchase. John moved to the present site of Connerville in 1808 being one of the first five settlers in the neighborhood. He opened a second store there to pioneers.

By 1815 Franklin County, with 7,370 population, was second only to Knox in size. John Conner owned the buildings and 320 acres at Cedar Grove, 120 acres at Laurel on the west fork of the Whitewater (where the famous Wetzel Trace started), and the Connersville cabin, store and blockhouse.

William Conner built a two-room cabin and trading post in 1802 on land given to him by Chief Anderson. It was between the Indian villages of Upper Delaware Town and Lower Delaware Town, on the east bank of White River where periodic high waters had formed a prairie amid the heavy wilderness forests. He quickly built up a prospering fur trade, and also sent as far as New Orleans the corn whiskey made in his two-story log stillhouse. It was far easier to transport whisky than bulky corn, and throughout pioneer Indiana whisky was an important export.

Conner was known by the Indians as the most honest of all the traders. This was in contrast to the many cheats and swindlers who robbed the Indians, abused their women, and drove them off their land.

A schedule of prices paid by William Conner includes these items: raccoon skins 37½ to 40c; wildcat, fisher and fox 50c to 67c; mink 50c. deer or buckskin $1; bear or otter $4 to $5. Conner and his helpers dressed, stretched and bundled the furs, and then packed them off on ponies on The Conner Trail.

William Conner continued in the fur business from 1802 to 1823, when the supplying of settlers wants became more profitable.

The pioneer advance affected everybody. The Conner brothers gradually changed from sons of the wilderness to fathers of the new State of Indiana. Their advice and friendship were eagerly sought. They acted as interpreters when another treaty was negotiated at Greenville (Ohio) in 1814, when the four treaties resulting in The New Purchase were executed at St. Mary's (Ohio) in 1818, and when the two Treaties of Mississinewa were negotiated in 1826.

William Conner helped Chief Anderson persuade 400 Delaware braves to reject Tecumseh's pleas that they join his preparations for the War of 1812. John Conner was Harrison's scout at the Battle of Tippecanoe, (1811) and William Conner was Col. John Campbell's chief scout at the Battle of Mississinewa, (1812) near the present city of Marion.

William Conner also was with Harrison at Fort Meigs in 1813. He helped to identify the body of Tecumseh when Harrison broke the power of the Northwest Territory Indians at the Battle of the Thames in Ontario on Oct. 15, 1813.

These operations on land by Harrison and Johnson's Kentuckians, and Admiral Perry's marine victories on Lake Erie, did much to secure the west for the new nation. The Conner brothers were at Greenville when the United States made its major peace with the Indians on July 22, 1814. The War of 1812 was formally concluded at the Treaty of Ghent on Dec. 24, 1814.

When John Conner's wife died, he married Lavina Winship (he was 38 and she was 25) on March 13, 1813. He built a new two-room cabin for her at Connersville, 60 miles up the Whitewater Trail from Cincinnati. When William visited John he was astonished at the different atmosphere when the housewife was not a squaw.

Franklin was one of the seven original Indiana counties, with Wayne and Dearborn counties it formed the Whitewater Coalition that helped Jonathan Jennings win as the State of Indiana's first Governor. Just as the Conner brothers were able to retain the friendship of both the Indians and the white settlers, so they were friendly with both Jennings and Harrison, who were arch political rivals.

John Conner was elected from Franklin County as one of the 10-man Indiana Senate when it first convened in 1817. When he succeeded in getting Fayette County formed from Franklin in 1818, he was appointed Fayette's first sheriff. And the new county seat for Fayette was Connersville!

The Delaware had agreed by treaty in 1818 to sell all their lands to the State of Indiana. Mekinges and her six Conner children decided to accompany them westward to Missouri. William Conner had been unable to get clear title from the American government to his considerable Hamilton County holdings. What could he give her? Finally it was agreed that he buy 60 ponies for his departing wife, and she in turn promised to send their children back to visit him at intervals.

The Delaware started their pitiful parture in September, 1820. Turng his back at least part way on the st, William Conner on Nov. 30, 20, married 17-year-old Elizabeth iapman. She was 30 years his jun-.

It was a civil ceremony, and one the first marriages in the New irchase. There was a big wedding ast, and not only the settlers but so Indians attended and remained the Conner homestead several ays.

The new wife had been born in New York, and then moved with her family to Connersvillle. In 1819 several families moved on to a prairie site between the Conner cabin and what is now Noblesville, traveling on horseback and by ox cart. William Conner immediately befriended the newcomers, and it was natural that he became acquainted with the Chapman girl.

In 1823 William Conner built a

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